

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN RURAL SCHOOLS IN THE NORTHERN PROVINCE.

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and has not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted at any university for a degree.

Date : 29/10/99.

SUMMARY

Rural schools in South Africa are faced with many problems such as poor family relations, lack of facilities and resources and poor motivation on the side of teachers and students. Against this background, this study addresses many of these problems. This investigation explores parental involvement in rural schools in black communities.

The literature study investigates barriers to parent involvement as well as ways and types of parental involvement. A historical perspective as well as theoretical perspective on parent involvement in education as well as legislation concerning education and parental involvement according to official documents are also discussed. The main contribution of this study is qualitative investigation of parental involvement in three schools i.e. a secondary school, a high primary school and a lower primary school, in the rural areas of the Northern Province. Data was collected by means of interviews with parents and teachers. Data is analysed, discussed and synthesised.

The major findings emerged are the following :

- * Many parents are uninterested and negative towards the school;
- * they have limited time;
- * there is total separation between the school and the parents; and
- * lack of implementation of ideas by teachers on parental involvement.

As such both teachers and parents need workshops on the issues of parental involvement. It is the duty of the school to lead parents in their involvement in the education of their children. Parents are the primary educators of their children and there should always be a close contact between the school and the community.

OPSOMMING

Plattelandse skole in Suid-Afrika word gekonfronteer met talle probleme soos o.a. swak gesinsverhoudings, ontoereikende fasiliteite en hulpbronne en gebrekkige motivering van beide onderwysers en leerlinge. In die studie wat fokus op die betrokkenheid van swart ouers by plattelandse skole, word talle van die probleme aangespreek.

In die literatuurstudie word die struikelblokke in die weg van ouerlike betrokkenheid ondersoek, asook die verskillende maniere waarop ouers by skole betrokke kan wees. Daar word 'n historiese sowel as 'n teoretiese perspektief op ouerbetrokkenheid by skoolopvoeding geggee en die wettlike aspekte van ouerbetrokkenheid soos vervat in offisiële dokumente word bespreek. Die vernaamste bydrae van die studie is 'n kwalitatiewe ondersoek na ouerlike betrokkenheid in drie skole, 'n sekondêre skool en 'n laer primêre skool in die landelike gebiede van die Noordelike provinsie. Gegewens is versamel deur middel van onderhouds met ouers en onderwysers en die data wat verkry is, is geanaliseer, bespreek en gesintetiseer.

Die volgende is van die belangrikste bevindings wat verkry is:

- Talle ouers het 'n negatiewe houding teenoor die skool en is nie geïnteresseerd in die aktiwiteite van die skool nie;
- Ouers se tyd vir betrokkenheid by die skool is baie beperk;
- Daar is 'n kloof tussen die ouers en die skool en;
- Die idees om ouerbetrokkenheid te bevorder word nie deur onderwysers geïmplimenter nie.

Daar is 'n behoefte aan werkswinkels oor verskillende aspekte van ouerbetrokkenheid vir beide ouers en onderwysers. Dit is die taak van die skool om leiding te gee aan ouers ten einde aktief betrokke te raak by die opvoeding wat hul kinders op skool kry. Ouers is die primêre opvoeders van hul kinders en daarom is noue samewerking tussen huis en skool baie belangrik.

**DEDICATED TO MY WIFE
TSHILIDZI AND OUR THREE
DAUGHTERS, THENDO, TODANI
AND LUFUNO.**

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CHAPTER ONE

ORIENTATION, PROBLEM FORMULATION AND CONCEPTUALISATION

“Parents are the key to effective education in the new South Africa.” - Sowetan 21 May 1992:13.

1.1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Every community has many obligations to fulfil on the basis of its own calling, welfare and survival. In modern communities each type of task is carried out by experts and specialists on behalf of the community. However, in the end it remains the community's responsibility to ensure that each task is properly carried out according to the principles that hold for it. Thus the community has a direct interest in each activity that takes place within it. Education and teaching is one of the community's responsibilities. As such education has a particular need for the contributions that parents can make.

Education has traditionally been regarded as a state responsibility and parents have all too often neglected their own obligations towards their children's development. Dekker and Lemmer (1993: 153-187) make it clear that, although the so called ideal parent is a rarity, schools can do a great deal to achieve greater parental involvement in school activities. According to the Star (22 June 1988:10) parents should assume the responsibility for their children and it is their right to do so. In this busy technological age, many parents tend to disregard the importance of their share in their children's education which, to a great extent, has been entrusted to other adults. Modern parents have a significant part to play in their children's education, not only at home but also at school.

Parental cooperation at the school with which they are associated is unfortunately not always what it should be. If there is any possibility of cooperation between parents and teachers and this is not being achieved, it becomes urgently necessary to investigate what is standing in the way of various parties.

It is unfortunate that most Africans have become passive recipients in what is truly and genuinely their own affair (Sowetan, 30 October 1988: 2).

It is important to get parents to take an interest in their children's education. Both parents and teachers want the same thing for children – the best possible education. Katz (1993:14) says that there is the undeniable link between parental involvement and school achievement, and teachers more than ever need to let parents know that they value their support. Changing family life has often resulted in transfer of parental responsibility for the education of their children to others. It might seem that the child belongs more to the school than to the family.

Pillay (1992: 2) contends that it is an established fact that parents instill basic human values in their children from birth and train them even before they enter any formal school situation. As a result, parents must continue to monitor the educational progress of their children. Vandegrift and Green (1992: 57) are of the opinion that the improvement of parent involvement particularly among at-risk populations, has become one of the most challenging tasks facing educators today. Parents should be treated as true partners, not as competitors. Hall (1986: 5) and Van Schalkwyk (1990: 3) agree that, both the educators – parents as well as teachers are ultimately responsible to the community. The family ought to be basically a community of love. As such it is responsible for the healthy development of its non-adult members. The family is not capable of educating the child in a differentiated manner. The school undertakes this task on behalf of the parents. Therefore, parents remain primarily responsible for what becomes of their children, and, therefore, they ought to be actively involved in formal education.

More recently, there has been a gradual move away from a total separation between home and school towards an increasing awareness and recognition of the central role of parents as equal partners in the education process. Effective and meaningful education requires the participation of both parents and teachers.

Educational Support Service Trust (1977:1) argues that education cannot improve without the involvement and dedication of the parents. Where parents are not given recognition or where their participation is not facilitated and encouraged, effective learning is threatened and hindered. Negative attitudes towards parental involvement, lack of resources to facilitate such involvement, lack of parent empowerment and support for parent organisations, particularly in poorer communities, all contribute to a lack of parental involvement in education (National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training and National Committee on Education Support Service 1997: 18).

Parents have an inborn aptitude for education and therefore have much to contribute to the discussion of educational issues. It is difficult for the school to cooperate with parents, however, if parents remain detached and refuse to get involved in school activities, so that they lose touch with educational issues and become incapable of cooperation. Parents who are uninterested, show no enthusiasm and never take the initiative, have no overall perspective on the education and teaching of their children and therefore see no sense in cooperating. Such parents are generally incapable of handling education at home satisfactorily and urgently need schooling in parenting skills. Swap (1993:1) remarked that home-school partnership is no longer a luxury. Parental involvement contributes to the success of children and that of the school.

One of the major problems in education in rural schools in the Northern Province is the relationship between schools and parents. The root of the problem can be traced back to the fact that these communities are not involved in their schools or do not want to be involved (Mavhivha and Heystek 1996: 6). The problem is also the fact that principals and teachers do not know how to accommodate parents in the management of school.

1.2. MOTIVATION FOR RESEARCH

Le Rony (1998:4) points out that recent developments in the transformation of education have followed a distinctive pattern which, if traced, outline the premise from which the current government views the nature and scope of the provision of Education.

Parents have the primary responsibility for the education of their children and have the right to be consulted by the state authorities regarding the form that education should take and to take part in its governance (Government Gazette 1994, first White Paper for Education and Training, February 1995). Parents ought to play a major role in school governance and they have the right to determine the mission, policy and character or ethos of schools.

Parents are one of the stakeholders in education who are needed for the positive changes in the South African education. Education is not a natural process. Many people have been aware of the immense problems, which have existed for years within the black education structures. It is at this point that parents need to intervene. Parents, who are owners of the schools, have forfeited their powers to influence to teach, they have abandoned the students and are left out most of the times when it comes to decision – making in the schools. Academic success depends heavily on the cooperation of parents.

Previously parents were not major role players in the school education of their children and this major issue in South Africa, needs to be addressed. In grappling with this issue many questions come to the fore:

- Are parents aware that for quality education to take place they need to be involved?
- Are parents themselves aware of their rights and privileges in education?
- What is the perception of the general public about parents' involvement in education?

If parents are given a chance to display their managerial or administrative skills, parents could help to take education system to greater heights. Lack of parental involvement, especially in the historically disadvantaged communities (rural areas) has been caused by factors such as the following:

- Parents are uninterested in what is happening in schools.

- Parents are negative towards the schools and teachers.
- Poor communication between parents and schools.
- Parents are mostly uneducated and there is a high rate of illiteracy.
- Parents are unwilling to accept responsibility for school matters.
- Parents are afraid of the school. They feel intimidated by the school, its staff members, the organized student movement and the prevailing political climate.
- Parents are unable to play a role in the education of their children because of a lack of training.
- There is a lack of cooperation between parents and school.
- Parental involvement is not facilitated.

Beside these, there are other many problems that can contribute to a lack of parental involvement in education such as, poverty in the community, violent situations in some areas, single parents, children who do not stay with their parents and teachers with little or no experience of parental involvement.

The research will focus on these problems and an attempt will be made to identify strategies that will promote parental involvement in the promotion of quality education in the disadvantaged areas of the Northern Province.

1.3. HYPOTHESIS

The fact that parents are the primary educators of their children, that their role in the formal education of their children influences the quality of education and that parental intervention during early childhood implies by authentic education, confirm the significance of the parents' role in their children's education. Therefore, the schools with good relationships with parents will have less management problems and better academic achievement.

There is often a lack of parental involvement in the historically disadvantaged schools. In such communities, the absence of the relationship between parents and schools has a

negative effect on the education of the children. Therefore, parental involvement in the education of their children is essential in establishing authentic education. The absence of parental involvement is characterized by the following:

- Poor relations and communication between the home and the school.
- Lack of cooperation, participation and partnership in educational matters.
- Negative attitudes towards parental involvement.
- Lack of coordination between parents and school.
- Parental negligence in educational matters of their children.
- Low parental interests in education.

This research will focus on identifying and investigating strategies and techniques for improving and strengthening the relationship between the parents and the school. This can be done by instilling a positive interactive relationship between the parents and the school, based on sound principles of:

- Cooperation;
- Participation; and
- Partnership

1.4. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF RESEARCH

According to Venter and Van Heerden (1992:104) research is the process which leads to ever more profound and accurate knowledge and insight; it is the route to scientific knowledge. Research, therefore is a human activity whereby a particular phenomenon in reality is studied in order to establish a valid understanding of the phenomenon.

The aim of this research is to investigate the reasons for the apparent lack of parental involvement in education in rural schools in the Northern Province.

This research will also provide guidelines to the community (parents), teachers and principals for an effective parental involvement in education. This may lead to better

relationship between the school and the community. The study is confined to secondary and primary schools and communities in the Northern Province in which this problem was identified. Therefore this research aims to:

- Determine the lack of parental involvement in rural schools in the Northern Province.
- Identify factors which prevent parents from participating in the education of their children.
- Determine the techniques to be used to overcome such problems.
- Investigate the methods and techniques available for resolving lack of parental involvement in education.
- Provide guidelines for improving parental involvement which can make contributions.
- Provide knowledge for teachers and principals in involving parents in education.
- Provide some solutions and recommendations for the improvement of parent involvement in rural schools.
- Conduct empirical investigation amongst parents, teachers and school managers with regard to parental involvement in education.
- Make some suitable conclusion and recommendations based on literature study and empirical investigation.
- Make some suggestions for further research.

1.5. LIMITATION OF STUDY

This research cannot be done in the whole of South Africa, but will be limited to Soutpansberg West Area of the Nzhelele East Circuit of Region 3 in the Northern Province, which is within the researcher's reach. This research would serve the Northern Province and South Africa as a whole. Ten primary and secondary schools, their principals, the teachers and parents in the rural areas of the Northern Province will be the target population of the research. This research does not claim to identify all problems associated with parental involvement in black rural communities.

The research only aims at gaining some understanding of the complexity of the problem and issues, and of the extent of parental involvement as seen through the eyes of the participants. The outcome of this research will be influenced by the economic and political background of the area in which the research will be conducted, i.e. rural areas of the Northern Province. The results of the research cannot be representative of represent South Africa as a whole but will be useful to education in South Africa. The investigation to be undertaken will be influenced by factors such as time, the availability of participants as well as their cooperation and honesty.

1.6. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The aim of this research is to identify, examine and document the investigation that is being undertaken in rural schools in the Northern Province in order to promote parental involvement. Venter and Verster (1987:24) remark that educational research is reserved for activities designed to discover facts and relationships that will make the educational process more effective. On the other hand, Venter and Heerden (1992:108) define method as the road by which the pedagogician carries out his scientific research and eventually discovers the truth, which he uses to establish his science. Stoker (1969:59) defines method as a way of planned, verifying and systematizing actions which serves as a means to form science by making use of that which can be scientifically recognized. Various methods of research will be used. The research will be conducted on the rural, disadvantaged communities in the Northern Province.

A **qualitative method** will be used by employing data gathering technique, such as observation and interviews to investigate parent involvement in rural schools in the Northern Province. This method is concerned with understanding human behaviour from the actor's own frame of reference. Cook and Reidhardt (1979:10) comment that, in order to understand the people under study, it would be necessary for the researcher to be immersed in that which is being investigated.

1.6.1. LITERATURE STUDY

McMillan and Schumacher (1993:113) mention that literature study includes many types of sources: professional journals, reports, scholarly books and monographs, government documents and dissertations. It may include empirical research, theoretical discussions, and views of the status of knowledge, philosophical papers and methodological treatises. De Klerk et.al. (1998: 29) also include newspapers, letters as well as literature obtained by computer such as the Internet.

The major part of this research will depend on the literature study. In an attempt to determine parental involvement in education, a literature study from different sources relevant to the research topic is undertaken. A literature study from primary and secondary sources will be undertaken in order to determine the main problems in rural schools of the Northern Province with parental involvement in education. University library will be consulted to find books, journals, researches already done by others and newspapers relevant to the topic to be researched. This means that in literature study, a wide variety of monographs, journals, educational legislation and official documents concerning South African education in general, and education within black rural communities in particular, will be undertaken.

1.6.2. HERMENEUTIC METHOD

The hermeneutic method, associated with the understanding or interpretation of texts, is achieved by studying facts, points of view, projections and controversies.

To be of scientific value, this type of research must, however, result in the synthesis of these facts, points of view, etc, forming a new unit, which is then reflected as a researcher's own finding.

De Klerk et al. (1988:31) mention that hermeneutic deals with understanding and making things understandable. Typically, this involves the interpretation of data. It is not sufficient only to read and discuss in order to arrive at an interpretation, but also to give a

rendition of all situations of life. The hermeneutic method, containing as it does an element of subjectivity by its very nature, naturally relies heavily on the ability of the researcher to understand the phenomenon that is under investigation and the circumstances surrounding it.

The inadequacies in the facts, the relationship between the standpoints, the defects in the points of departure and the shortcomings in the conclusions must be indicated, and must result in a statement of a point of view that endeavors to obviate those inadequacies.

Although the gathering of data is mainly done by studying literature, data may also be obtained by observing processes or patterns of events and phenomena. The description of standpoints and phenomena always precedes interpretation or understanding (Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education 1995:35).

1.6.3. HISTORICAL RESEARCH METHOD

According to Venter and Verster (1987:36) the true starting point of the historical research method is always some present situation with its problems. The well-known German educationist Wolfgang Brezinka expresses the same thought by saying that science does not begin with factualities, but with problems and attempts at solutions. The starting point is a practical interest, questions and problems. In this study it is parental involvement in rural schools in the Northern Province.

According to McMillan and Schumacher (1993:40) the historical method involves a systematic collection and criticism of documents that describe past events. The analysis examines causes and trends and often relates the past to current events.

1.6.4. QUESTIONNAIRES

Questionnaires are the most widely used technique for obtaining information from subjects. It is relatively economical. According to McMillan and Schumacher (1993:238)

questionnaires can use statements or questions, but in all cases the subject is responding to something written.

Nisbet and Entwistle (1970:44) remark that the questionnaire may be regarded as a form of interview on paper. The procedure for the construction of questionnaires follows a pattern similar to that of the interview schedule. To obtain reliable data, questionnaires have to be carefully formulated. Questionnaires with unstructured questions were formulated and presented to the parents, teachers and principals in schools in the rural areas of the Northern Province.

1.6.5. OBSERVATION

The observational research method is used to describe the data that are collected, regardless of the technique employed in the study. It also refers to a more specific method of collecting information that is very different from interviews or questionnaires. The observational method relies on a researcher's seeing and hearing things and recording these observations, rather than relying on subjects' self-report responses to questions or statements (McMillan and Schumacher 1993:256)

In this study, observation as a method will be used. Van Dalen (1979:163) argues that in observational studies the researcher collect data on the current status of entities by watching them and listening to them rather than asking questions about them.

The researcher will observe the behaviour of parents, teachers and principals as far as parental involvement in education is concerned. As a teacher in this area, the researcher is already a participant observer. Parents meetings, governing body's meetings and visits amongst parents, teachers and principals give the researcher a thorough knowledge as regard to the topic.

1.6.6. INTERVIEWS

Ethnographic interviews will be used. They are open-response questions to obtain data of participant meanings on how individuals conceive their world and how they explain or make sense of the important events in their lives. Interviews may be the primary data collection strategy or a natural outgrowth of observation strategies. Ethnographic interviews vary in formats, specialised applications, question content, question sequence and the logistics of conducting and recording interviews (McMillan and Schumacher 1993:423-426).

The researcher communicates orally with the respondents and collects more data in interviews. The researcher values face-to-face meetings, where he is able to encourage subjects and help them probe more deeply into the problem. Acquired information will be recorded. Interviews will be conducted in a private setting with one person at a time so that the subject used can freely express themselves. Unstructured and informal interviews will be used in this research.

1.6.7. CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

This method will also be used. As a result of this method, different concepts will be defined in order to clarify them and to show the appropriate usage of concepts in this research. It is the study of educational concepts which describe the meaning and appropriate use of the concept. (McMillan and Schumacher 1993:40). The meaning of a concept is clarified by describing the essential or genetic meaning, the different meanings, and the appropriate usage of the concept. The focus is on the meaning of the concept, not on the researcher's personal values or on factual information. A conceptual analysis also describes each subcomponent and its relationship to other sub-components of the concept parental involvement and some related concepts which will be used throughout this investigation, are defined.

1.7. LIMITATIONS ON AVAILABILITY OF RELEVANT MATERIALS.

There is a general perception that most of the whites are concerned about the education of their children. Historically disadvantaged black parents especially from rural areas care less about the education of their children. They see the education of their children as the responsibility of teachers and principals. Doing this investigation, the researcher has to understand the historical background and the environment of those historically disadvantaged people from which the research is being done. Other limitation is the fact that no previous study was done on this specific subject. Literature on parental involvement in schools of other areas may also not be applicable to the specific area of study.

1.8. LIMITATION OF THE AREA

This research is confined to primary and secondary schools in the Region 3 in the Soutpansberg East circuit in the Northern Province.

1.9. CONCEPTUALISATION / EXPLANATION OF KEY CONCEPTS

Before this research can be undertaken, it is very important to explain the key concepts fundamental to the study. The definitions below are concerned with those concepts cited in the topic and also those which are directly related to the topic.

1.9.1. Parental involvement / cooperation / participation / partnership

Although distinction between the above concepts can be made all express different shades of meaning and they can be used interchangeably. These concepts are usually determined by the context in which they are used and therefore do not have neutral content. These concepts are determined mainly by the following context (CF Dok 1990: 9):

- The parent in his educational relation and activities within the family;
- The parent's educational relation and activities with regard to the school.
- The degree of authority with which he/she carries out activities within the family and in the school context.
- The ethics fundamental to his/her educational activities both within the family and in the school context.

Parent

The term parent is usually defined in relation to the family. This term here does not only denote the dictionary meaning but also the ones who care, and have custody and control over and concern for the child (Wolfendale 1992:20). According to the South African School Act (Republic of South Africa 1996:4) and Pretorius and Lemmer (1988:30) the term "parent" refers to:

1. The parent or guardian of a learner;
2. The person legally entitled to custody of a learner;
3. The person who undertakes to fulfill the obligation of a person referred to in 1 and 2 towards the learner's education at school.

PARENTAL

According to Le Roux (1988:18) a parent is: "...father or mother, person who has begotten or borne a child, a person who holds the position of a parent, guardian. Parental, although referring to the root word parent, bears in addition the connotation of 'love' as can be deduced from both the New Universal Self-pronouncing Dictionary of English Language (1930:656): pertaining to or becoming parents, found" and Webster's Dictionary (S.A: 282): "pertaining to or becoming parents, tender, affectionate."

According to Le Roux (1998:18), The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles (1978:1512) is not as explicit in their reference to the bound of affection, but rather by implication alludes to this: "Characteristics of a parent, motherly, fatherly".

Le Roux (1998:18) and Spiro (1971:317) on the other hand provide a judicial definition and in this regard distinguished between:

PARENT, the father or mother of a child born of or legitimated by a lawful marriage, or the mother of an illegitimate child, and includes an adoptive parent.

FOSTER PARENT means any person who undertakes the temporary care of any child who has been placed in his custody in terms of criminal procedure legislation.

GUARDIAN means tutor testamentary, tutor dative or assumed tutor to whom letters of confirmation have been granted under the law relating to the administration of estates.

In relation to this investigation PARENT refers to the custodian adults whose responsibility is to oversee and provide for the needs, protection and education of a child of school going age.

Parental involvement

Engle (1998:10) McCaleb (1993:3) and Munn (1993:2) define parental involvement as the active and willing participation of parents in a wide range of school and home based activities. It is manifested in a variety of activities, from supporting and upholding the ethos of the school to supervising children's homework.

Dekker and Lemmer (1993:154) defines parental involvement as:

"... A catch – all term that is used to describe a wide variety of activities that range from occasional attendance at school functions to intensive efforts to help parents become better teachers of their own children."

It is the realization of parental joint responsibility for education in the interest of the child, the school and education, in a more or less undefined manner, in various areas and

at various levels. Vandegrift and Green (1992:57) describe the concept involvement in two ways, i.e.

- (1) Parents are supportive – they encourage their children and commit themselves to the education of their children;
- (2) Parents are active – what they do is observable. Parental involvement includes also parents participation in the activities of the governance of the school.

Parental participation

This implies joint authority on the part of the parents (Dekker and Lemmer 1993:156) and (Dekker 1994:5). This is the exercise of joint parental responsibility for education in the interests of the child, the school and education through authoritative joint decision making (participation) in formal structures created for that purpose, with the understanding that the school is a unique, autonomous institution and as such cannot be dictated to by the parents.

Parental partnership

This is the formal and informal exercise of parental joint responsibility in education in the interests of the child, the school and education, in the various forms, but on the understanding that relationships and motives rest on a sound ethical basis which recognizes and respects the territory of each partner (Engle 1998:11).

Parental cooperation

Parents and teachers have to share skills and information with each other and to do so in an open, honest way which includes recognition of each other's limitations and expertise (Mitter and Mitter 1982:48). The effectiveness of parental cooperation depends on the nature, the level and the meaning of the activities.

According to Engle (1998:11) this concept refers to the realisation of parent joint responsibility for education in a more defined and organised manner in various areas and at various levels.

1.9.2. SCHOOL

Van Schalkwyk (1990:113) defines the school as a place of instruction and a place where pupils learn. This requires the presence of learners, educators, learning materials and objectives. The school is purposefully supported by supporting services so those teachers can concentrate on the task of educating and teaching. **Rural schools** are therefore those schools in the country or in remote areas.

1.9.3. PROVINCE

A province is an administrative district or a division of a country. After the 1994 multiracial elections, South Africa was divided into nine provinces. Therefore, a province can be seen as a portion of a country (Webster 1993:1827). The **Northern Province** is situated on the northern part of South Africa.

SEQUENCE OF STUDY

Chapter two includes a thorough literature study with the aim of providing a theoretical background to parental involvement. This chapter focuses briefly on the **historical perspective** on parental involvement. The role of parents during the previous periods will be discussed as suggested by different philosophers and different perspectives. Various ancient nations had different perceptions as far as parental involvement is concerned. An overview of parental involvement in South Africa will also be discussed in this chapter.

In chapter three the focus will be on the **theoretical perspective** of parental involvement. The role of the parents as partners, role-players and stakeholders in education will be

investigated. The role of the parent will be investigated according to the official documents (since ± 1990). The role of parents as primary educators will also be acknowledged.

Chapter Four focuses on the causes of lack of **parental involvement** in education. The various factors, which hamper the parent–school relationship are investigated in this chapter.

Chapter Five focuses on the **case study**, i.e. empirical research of the situation in rural schools in the Northern Province. This will include analysis and feedback of responses to the questionnaires and interviews with parents, teachers and principals. These questions are designed in such a way that they elicit information from the respondents pertaining to problems associated with the participation of parents in education of their children.

Based on the literature study of Chapter Two, the theoretical perspective of Chapter Three, the discussion of the lack of parental involvement in education in Chapter Four and the empirical study of Chapter Five, Chapter Six will provide an **evaluation** of the role of parents in education of their children. In this chapter **recommendations** are made on how parents can be involved in education of their children, and also **suggestions** for further research on this topic.

CHAPTER TWO

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ON PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

“Parents should not allow that responsibility to educate their children to be taken away from them (The Star 22 June 1988 :10)”.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Parental involvement in education is a very old and traditional concept. In recent decades schools and government agencies have been stressing the importance of educators and parents working together as partners to further the educational aims of their children. Today parental involvement is emphasized, recognized and acknowledged. In fact, since prehistoric times, family groups and parents have been involved with the rearing of their young (Berger 1987:24).

2.2 HISTORY OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

History provides indisputable evidence that no permanent and effective replacement can be found for the family (Verster, et.al. 1990:118). The chief characteristic of the family as a closed, sovereign mini-community, is its entity. In a structural sense the family of today is the same as that of the past (Ibid). The particular structure of the family determines all its various activities – therefore also its educational activities. An essential requirement for family existence is that it should show itself to be above all a pedagogic milieu, capable of transforming a pedagogic situation should pedagogic moments arise.

2.2.1 PARENTS ARE THE PRIMARY EDUCATORS OF THEIR CHILDREN

Since the family, as the primary educational community, has its bounds and limitations and cannot hope to remain the sole source of education, school attendance has obviously become the second milieu.

However, parents still retain primary responsibility for their children's education and teaching and therefore their right to send their children to a school where they will receive education corresponding with their convictions and views concerning life and the world.

2.2.1.1 ANCIENT ISRAELITES (600 BC)

In the Ancient Israelite family, it was the parents' (and above all the father's) duty and devise right to bring up the children. The father had practically unlimited authority over his children and strict upbringing was combine with a hash and rigid discipline. Parents were nevertheless attached to their children, regarding them as an exceptional gift from the Lord.

As an educator, the father played the role of guide, advisor and teacher. He was expected to instruct his son in the Law (the Torah) and to teach him to trade. Besides the training which parents receive from their own parents, members of the family and other adults, the father could extend his studies in the synagogue, where he would make a detailed study of the Law which he could later pass on to his children (Verster et.al. 1988:1-2).

The parents therefore played an important part as the child's first educators. Children were expected to honour and respect their parents accordingly (Verster et.al. 1988: 25-26).

According to the Law of Moses, the duty of father as the head of the family was to educate the family according to the Law of God. In his task he was helped by the mother.

- Parents were figures of authority and not children's playmates, as such, obedience, respect and love were the characteristics of the children in the Ancient Israelites. Even before the exile to Babylon, when there were no schools, parents educated their children in their profession. The mother educated daughters on family chores. This was done in discipline because of parents' authority.

- To show that must be involved in their children's education, even after exiles, when there were schools, parents were to educate their children on the aspect of faith until the child was six years.

The Ancient Israelites were very conscious of the primary role of parents in the education of their children, as the Old Testament clearly shows. The important role of the father is reflected in Proverbs 4:1: "Hear, O sons, a father's instruction and be attentive, that you may gain insight". The significant role of the mother is mentioned in Proverbs 6:20: "My son, keep your father's commandment, and forsake not your mother's teaching." Order in the theocratic state could only be maintained if parents were obeyed. A son who stubbornly rebelled against his father could be stoned (Van Zyl and Coetzer 1994:4-5). Even after the founding of schools, the immediate family played an important part in the education and teaching of the child.

Although the mother was the chief educator of the smaller children (and especially of her daughter), it was pre-eminently the father's task to undertake the education of his sons. The entire family was involved in the education, since even the grandmother – who held an important position within the family – had say in the education of the children. The father and mother also had the obligation of instructing their children in the religious and moral codes of their people (Verster et.al. 1990:120).

2.2.1.2 EARLY ROMAN (± 753 – 146 BC)

Romans parents played an important role in the education of their children. Schools were non-existent during this period and parents were responsible for the child's practical and military education, for the purpose of moulding a good man, citizen and soldier. The term "good" embraced the virtues of obedience, courage, honesty, gravity, worthiness and modesty. The child was also taught to respect his people's laws, traditions and religion (Verster et.al. 1988:121). The early Roman regarded the family as the obvious place for bringing up and educating children.

Children were initially taught by the mother, noted for her high moral character. Generally, the mother was also required to train the daughter in all the household duties. This prepared the girl for her future role as center of the family, embodying the feminine virtues of chastity, morality and domesticity (Ibid:121).

Even in the best families, the mother regarded it as her duty to remain at home and to care for her children and she saw this as an honour. If the mother was incapable of fulfilling her function properly, a governess was appointed to care for the children. This person was always a member of the family, an experienced woman who was respected by the entire family and someone who knew how to maintain a strict atmosphere with high moral standards. The early Roman would never tolerate his children's being educated by an unknown servant or nurse. The father was regarded as the boy's true teacher and imprinted the Roman virtues of gravity, piety, courage and loyalty to the state upon his son's character through word and example.

The father's duty also included the training his son in the art of warfare and physical exercise. Here the boy learned his duties and ideals through observation and listening. Family education was essentially, then, schooling in moral values, obedience, self-discipline and modesty of attitude and behavior (Ibid: 122). During the early Roman period parental discipline was very strict and punishment could at times be cruel. As head of the family the father exercised unlimited authority over his children (Ibid:122).

2.2.1.3 MARTIN LUTHER (1483 – 1546)

Martin Luther was convinced that the parental role was the decisive one in achieving his educational aim, which was the establishment of God's kingdom on earth based on the proclamation of, and insight into, the Word of God (Van Zyl and Coetzer 1994:5). According to Luther, the basis of all education depended on the holy calling of the father and mother. Since the parents transmit and explain the Word of God to their children, the latter must therefore honour and respect their parents. Carelessness or incapacity may sometimes mean that parents do not fully supply their child's need for teaching (Verster

et.al. 1988:44). Martin Luther therefore insisted that parents should educate their children (or God's gifts as he often called them) in the ways of the Lord from an early age.

Because of the significance of their role in achieving this educational aim, Luther viewed parents as members of the priesthood. However, he did not underestimate the role of the school which, he believed could help to achieve this educational aim. Secular subjects such as the natural sciences, physical exercises and Hebrew and Greek would enhance a true understanding of the Scriptures. The parental role was, however, regarded as extremely important (Van Zyl and Coetzer 1994:5).

Luther maintained a view that parental authority over the education of the children forms the basis of all education. Parents do this task as obeying of a high or holy calling.

- To him, children must respect their parents. Obedience is to him, as good as abstaining from theft or murder. Disobedience is like a curse and it is evil. If children become disobedient, hostile, etc, Luther maintains that the parent's role may have failed.
- To Luther this aspect of parental authority over their children's education was based on religious conviction, where God constitution ordered the family, the father as head of the family for having authority over it.
- Parents must rule over their children in the same way that employers govern their employees.

2.2.1.4 JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU (1712 - 1778)

Although Jean Jacques Rousseau in his book *Emile* insisted that children's education should be the task of a private tutor in an isolated environment, Rousseau nevertheless believed parents to be the primary educators. This is evident in his minor educational works (Ibid: 5). Rousseau's views on education, as set out in the novel *Emile*, allocate to the mother as primary educator the task of caring for her child up to the age of

approximately five years. Up to the age of twelve years the father must lead the child with regard to physical, sensory, mental and moral development. The father's task is to place strong emphasis upon leadership and supervision and not on instruction, as a playing child will naturally gain sufficient experience by sensory perception, motor activity and individual development (Verster et.al. 1988:49 – 50).

Rousseau considered the family to be the ideal place for education. He unequivocally warned parents about children's need for help and their total dependence upon loving care. He also urged mothers to establish close contact with their children up to the age of five. He strongly condemned the practice of leaving small children in the care of servants or guardians, since this would expose the child to negative influences during his most sensitive years. The parental couple shares the responsibility of caring for and raising the child. In the same way that the mother has her task, the father must give the child the necessary guidance. The boy's education should in fact be entrusted to his father's care throughout his entire life (Verster et.al. 1988:128).

2.2.2 AUTHENTIC EDUCATION IMPLIES PEDAGOGIC INTERVENTION BY THE PARENT DURING THE CHILD'S EARLY YEARS.

2.2.2.1 PLATO (427-347 BC)

Like many educationists, Plato in his *Laws* maintained that successful education depends on parental intervention early in child's life. In his book *Republic*, he advocated the role of civil servants in educating children from birth, because this would ensure the best service to the state. Plato placed greater emphasis on the importance of parents inculcating correct habits into their children, since they believed this would most benefit the interest of the state.

Therefore the adult is obliged to intervene and protect the child against everything which is untrue, unclean, immoral and burdensome.

2.2.2.2 JOHANN HEINRICH PESTALOZZI (1746 – 1827)

In 'Leonard Und Gertrude', Pestalozzi clearly showed his belief that, from birth, the child should experience emotional security in his parents home, which would protect his inherent goodness from the onslaught of a corrupt society and allow it to develop. The mother had to foster confidence, gratitude and obedience in the young child. According to Pestalozzi, the mother had to teach basics, such as fundamental beliefs about God (Van Zyl and Coetzer, 1994:6) and (Ibid). The family, bastion of character and religion, forms the nucleus of education. Pestalozzi required that the mother should be a source of understanding love. Furthermore the ideals and views of the parents, especially the mother, are of paramount importance (Verster et.al. 1988:51).

Pestalozzi viewed the family as the center of all education, demanding understanding love from the mother. The first step in educating the child should be to gain his love. This is essential for his entire development and the building of a strong character. The emotional safety of a loving family thus nurtures the child's spontaneity and self-employment. To avoid emotional problems, the child must have a sense of belonging at home. Pestalozzi therefore wanted the school, as a complement to the family, to be as similar as possible to home circumstances - creating, as it were, a second home (Verster et.al. 1988:128-129).

2.2.2.3 FRIEDRICH FROEBEL (1782 – 1852)

Froebel believed that the entire educational event is based on elementary education, which takes place at home. He even advised the state to establish institutions in which parents could be taught how to educate their children. His work 'Mutter – und Kose – Lieder' (Mother and child songs) is a collection of songs to be sung by mother and child together, to acquaint the child with the elements of learning from an early age. Froebel also urged mothers to play with their children (Van Zyl and Coetzer, 1994:6-7).

Froebel regarded family education most highly and he initially attempted to give mothers an example of how to educate very young children.

2.2.2.4 EARLY ROMANS (±753-146 BC)

Verster (1988:121) alleged that schools were non-existent during this period and the immediate family had total responsibility for the child's practical and military education, for the purpose of moulding a good man, citizen and soldier.

The early Roman regarded the family as an obvious place for bringing up and educating children. Children were initially taught by the mother, noted for her high moral character. She also bore responsibility for more formal schooling such as reading, writing and arithmetic, although these were not very advanced.

The father was regarded as boys true teacher and imprinted the Roman virtues, piety, courage and loyalty to the state upon his son's character through word and example. The father's duty also included training his son by institutions such as the military camp, the public forum and the workshop. Here the boy learns learned his duties and ideals through observation and listening (Ibid:121)

2.2.2.5 DESIDERIUS ERASMUS (1446-1536)

According to Verster et.al. (1988:127). Erasmus held the view that the child is created not only for parents, but also for the service of the community and the glory of God. In their involvement with the child, parents thus have a tremendous responsibility to God and the community. He also condemned the custom of using wet-nurses to raise children and felt that the child should be cared for by the mother alone until at least the age of seven, since the early childhood years are most important. In addition to physical care, the mother should be responsible for the child's learning good manners, acquiring a love of the truth and displaying of respect.

2.2.3 PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN FORMAL EDUCATION OF CHILDREN.

2.2.3.1 MARCUS FABIVS QUINTILIAN (+35 - +100 AD)

Like all great educators, Quintillion stressed those parents and those who care of children must begin educating the child at an early age. Since the family influences the child right from the start, both parents – and not only the father – should be educated. He believed that parents themselves must be schooled. He nevertheless did not overlook the role of nurses, pedagogues and companions. However, parents had to select their co-educator carefully to prevent the child from developing habits of incorrect speech and poor pronunciation, which would spoil his chances of a career as an orator. The creation of successful orators may be regarded as Quintillion's chief educational aim. Quintilian attached great importance to the role of both parents in educating the child.

He regarded as especially important the education of smaller children. He felt that children should be cared for by their own mothers (Van Zyl and Coetzer, 1994:5 and Verster et.al. 1988: 35-36).

2.2.3.2 JOHN LOCKE (1632 – 1704)

John Locke allotted the formal education of a gentleman largely to a private tutor. He was convinced, however, that parents should determine the nature of the child's formal education. In his work 'Some thoughts concerning education' he recommended that the father should apply strict selective measures when appointing a tutor, that he should check on the education provided by the tutor, and that the latter should be dismissed if he did not set a good example. Locke maintained that parental authority in education should not be neglected (Van Zyl and Coetzer, 1994:5-6 and Verster et.al. 1988:71).

2.2.3.3 HORACE MANN (1796 – 1859)

Mann established the public school (common school) in the USA, because he believed that the school had to be placed under public control, being managed by school boards, although the schools were funded by the state. These school boards reflected parental representation in public schools and were illustrative of the fact that Mann was convinced that parental involvement in the education of their children would lead to more authentic education (Van Zyl and Coetzer, 1994:6).

2.3 OVERVIEW OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA

In South Africa, the definition of parental involvement changed over time in the educational discourse. For the state, the involvement of parents in schooling was regarded more as a means of financing schools than as an object in itself (Makwanazi, 1994:25). On the other hand, the opposition used the term parental involvement to legitimize their resistance to unjust official policies. Van Wyk (1996:110) stresses that the history of parent involvement closely follows that of educational provision for black South Africans.

2.3.1 PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT DURING PRE-DEMOCRATIC ERA

During the pre-democratic era, school management councils were established by the government in 1953 and again re-established in terms of the 1979 education act (Mkwanzazi, 1994:25). In the pre-democratic era, allowance was made for two types of formal parental involvement; a statutory parent body (usually called a management council or school committee) and a non-statutory body (usually called a parent-teacher association or a parent-teacher-student association). These structures had certain powers granted to them by law.

Management councils were established in most traditionally white schools, but, were, on the whole, rejected by the black population (Van Schalkwyk, 1988:88).

In addition to school management bodies, there were also voluntary parent associations operating in most traditionally white schools. These bodies were “free associations” and did not have powers granted to them by law. Parent associations usually functioned on a more social level, collecting funds, assisting at school functions, etc. Although the management council could not concern itself directly with the professional activities of the school, it could, however, report on them and make recommendations to the director of education.

This could include recommendations regarding the appointment of teachers (Van Schalkwyk, 1988:88). The management council/school committee could also collect money to defray current expenditure and also controlled such funds. Finally a management council carried out all duties entrusted to it by education authorities (Van Schalkwyk, 1988:89) and (Van Wyk, 1996:110).

The statutory body functioning on district level was known as a school boards, and had a supervisory, advisory, administrative and managerial tasks regarding education (Van Wyk, 1996:111). According to the circumstances, such as the size of the school district or the number of educational institutions within its boundaries, a school board could consist of 6 to 12 members representing the various institutions.

The non-statutory parent body, usually called Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) or Parent-Student Association (PTSA), did not have power granted to it by law. Its main purpose was to combine the efforts of parents and teachers to a limited degree when a service, such as fund raising, was required by the school.

Among the measures provided for in the Bantu Education Act of 1953 was the establishment of bodies at district and local level. These bodies could participate in the administration of schooling in black areas, called, respectively, the school boards and the school committees, management councils (Hyslop, 1989:201). In introducing the Bantu Education Act the then Minister of Native Affairs, Verwoerd argued that black parents in

particular should be made co-responsible for their children's education and that this included co-responsibility in respect of finances (Mkwanazi, 1993:52).

School committees were perceived by the state as essential for creating allegiance to Bantu Education to subsidize the kind of cheap mass education, which the state was aiming at. However, Van Wyk (1996:111) concludes, "...the school committee failed to play the hegemonic role it was designed to fulfill. As was the case in white education, school committees were responsible for a particular school. In contrast to white schools, parents could elect only four to six of the committee members.

In urban areas the remainder of school committee members, comprising a majority, were direct appointees of the Secretary for Native Affairs or the local Native Commissioner (Hyslop, 1989:205). The school committees were to be the link to the community, controlling school funds, erecting new buildings, and advising the school boards.

The real power was embodied in the system subsisted in the school boards. School boards, in black education were wholly appointed bodies, with one school board controlling a group of school committees. The school boards had considerable power over local schools and teachers. From 1955 all African teachers' salaries were paid as subsidies to the school boards, which meant that the boards effectively controlled hiring and firing of teachers. Although there were many school committees and school boards by the end of the 1960's, their structure and policies continued to generate friction between them, the community and teachers (Van Wyk, 1996:112).

Mkwanazi (1993:53) does concede that the school boards and committees were successful in forcing parents to finance their children's education. In the Department of Education and Training (DET) Annual Report (1979:99) the function of school committees is once more set out:

“In order to ensure community involvement at each community school, a school committee consisting of nine members is elected by parents, although their work still largely consists mainly of the collection of funds.

However, school committees act in an advisory capacity, but when a school is situated in an area where it cannot be grouped with other schools under a school board, the school committee is entrusted with the authority of a school board in order to control the school”.

The introduction of De Lange Commission in 1980, was an attempt by the government to address the deepening crisis in education and the uncompromising stance of the parents on involvement in education through established structures (Mkwanazi, 1994:55). Although the report stressed the need for parents to have a greater share in decision making, the role of the parents in legitimating the system was once more emphasized (Van Wyk, 1996:113) and (Kallaway, 1990:33). The government’s Education Renewal Strategy (ERS), launched in 1991, contained proposals for the decentralization of the education system through the establishment of management councils at all schools with increased decision making and executive functions (Department of National Education, 1992:75-76) and (Van Wyk, 1996:113).

The Curriculum Model of the same year moves further than the Education Renewal Strategy in regard to parental involvement in education and acknowledges the participation in curriculum development. Mkwanazi (1993:59) states that, “... this represents a notable shift on the part of the state towards recognition of the opposition’s concept of parental governance”.

2.3.2 PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE DEMOCRATIC ERA

Judging by the various official documents released since 1994 relating to education, it appears as if the new democratic government is addressing the issue of parental involvement.

2.3.2.1 THE WHITE PAPER ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING 1995

The changes envisaged for education in South Africa as set out in the Department of Education (1995(a):22) and White Paper on Education and Training (March, 1995(b)) highlighted the importance of parent and community involvement in education. This can be illustrated by the following extract:

“The principle of democratic governance should increasingly be reflected in every level of the system, by the involvement in consultation and appropriate forms of decision-making of elected representatives of the main stake holders, interest groups and role players. This is the only guaranteed way to infuse new social energy into the institutions and structures of the education and training system, dispel the chronic alienation of large sectors of society from the education process, and reduce the power of government administration to intervene where it should not” (1995:22).

2.3.2.2 THE HUNTER REPORT 1995

The Hunter Report chaired by Prof. A.P. Hunter was released in 31 August 1995. In this report various suggestions relating to school governance (or formal parent involvement) were made. The Hunter Report (1995:51) acknowledged that “...parents have both the right and the responsibility to participate in the education of their children”, and recommended that schools establish governance structures that would enable elected representatives to assume active and responsible roles in the determining and adoption of policies in schools. School governance and management were seen as interwoven elements in a process that was aimed at enabling schools to provide effective and efficient education.

In their discussion of the role and responsibilities governing bodies, the committee agreed that not all bodies would be able to accept responsibility for the total range of functions (Hunter Report, 1995:56). The committee suggested that a governing body should be able to negotiate for certain powers or functions.

Examples of such functions are maintenance of school buildings, the purchase of textbooks and materials, and the purchase of equipments. If the governing body does not have the relevant management capacity, the educational authority will exercise these powers on behalf of the governing body (Hunter Report, 1995:57).

2.3.2.3 THE WHITE PAPER ON EDUCATION NO.2, 1996

The White Paper on Education No.2 of 1996 entitled 'The organization, governance and funding of school' was released in February 1996 and was based on the proposals set out in the Hunter Report. Included in the White Paper (1996(a):16) was the suggestion that school governing structures should involve all stakeholder groups in active and responsible roles, encourage tolerance, rational discussion and collective decision making.

According to the White Paper (D.E. 1996(a):17) each public school must have a governing body by January 1997 which should comprise elected representatives of:

- (i) Parents and guardians of learners currently enrolled at school
- (ii) Teachers
- (iii) Learners (in secondary school only)
- (iv) Non-teaching staff
- (v) The principal (ex officio)
- (vi) Members of the community, elected by the governing body.

If necessary, additional members should be nominated to ensure gender balance. Full participation on governing bodies may be difficult for women in communities where they have been denied a voice of their own. The parents and guardians should have the largest representation on the governing body and the membership should reflect such diversity as there is within the relevant school community (Ibid:17). Governing bodies should not be structures for political party representation. A formal election processes should determine membership of the governing body. The term of the office for elected

members should be three years, except for learner members, who should be elected for one year. The chairperson should be elected by the governing body from among its members, but should not be the principal, teacher or a learner.

The Ministry of Education (D.E. 1996(a), 19-20) listed roles and responsibilities of the governing bodies. Typically, governing body decisions would be made on:

- The school's mission, goals and objectives
- Fund-raising and control of finance
- School-community communication strategies
- School budget priorities
- Codes of behavior for staff and learners
- School times and timetables
- Subject choices and extra-mural timetable
- Services and community partnerships relating to social, health, recreational and nutritional programs
- Methods of reporting to parents
- Community use of school facilities
- Appointment of administrative staff.

Governing bodies can also recommend to the provincial authority the appointment of teachers. In addition, the governing body should organize information and training sessions to enable members of the governing body to develop their skills. The governing body must hold a minimum of four meetings per year.

The acknowledgement of the government that parents have a right to be involved in decision making at school is commendable. However, it is lamentable that there is a lack of encouragement or incentive to expand parent involvement to other aspects of education. School governance is of great importance, but does not involve the majority of parents, besides allowing them to vote for the members of the governing body.

2.4 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the history of parental involvement is discussed. It is maintained that there is a mistaken notion that parent involvement is a new concept when, in fact, it is only emphasized and acknowledged now for the vital role it plays in the education of children. Parental involvement in South Africa is discussed during the pre-democratic era and in the democratic era.

Historically, when formal schooling did make its appearance, schools have been granted a great deal of autonomy in the execution of their task of educating the child. Society did not challenge the schools as long as it seemed that the assigned tasks were being accomplished satisfactorily. Educators enjoyed immunity from public scrutiny and the community languished in complacency in the knowledge that the job was being done.

But today, most researchers agree that families provide the primary shaping role in early socialization and there is an increasing awareness among parents of the need to be involved in the education of their children. It is common knowledge, however, that the degree of involvement varies from family to family and from community to community. This may be attributed to numerous factors, which may have the cumulative effect of either facilitating or inhibiting parental involvement in education.

The following chapter shall focus on the theoretical perspective as far as parental involvement in education is concerned.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE ON PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

If teachers and parents work together, everyone benefits – especially the children (Katz: 1993)

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The role of the school is to supplement what the home has started in terms of educating young people. Parents are therefore primarily the ones who build the foundation in the young people's minds. Engle (1998:65) emphasizes parental involvement by stating: "If families, however constructed, are to be real partners in their children's education, then they must be able to share real power, responsibility and ownership with schools in ways which show a high degree of mutuality". He further stresses that positive parental involvement with schools is one of the essentials of an effective school. Some parents are eager to get involved in school activities that will enhance effective quality learning. However, they find themselves incapacitated by lack of support, information, skills and values with which to undertake this task. The family remains the central and fundamental educational environment of the child.

Nowadays parents have an increasingly role to play in the education of their children. Gone are those days when parents relinquished their responsibilities to teachers and remained detached from school activities (Dekker and Lemmer, 1994:226). Many of the fundamental beliefs, attitudes and ways of thinking, which the child carries with him through the school and into the broader community are inculcated long before he goes to school (Davey, 1994:129). Much of this early learning is so highly internalized that the child may remain impervious to, and be scarcely affected by later experiences or later contact with other social group.

Van Schalkwyk (1990:202) states that, the parent is the primary and natural educator of the child. He 'gives' life to him, receives him into the world, cares for him physically and spiritually, assumes full responsibility for his total existence and 'delegates' a specific facet of his child's education and teaching, for a number of years, to his partner, the teacher. During those years he should be fully involved in the formal teaching which his child receives at school, be sympathetic regarding what happens at school, support and enrich it, be able to take decisions on it, render service to the school, and keep on caring (physically and spiritually) for the child so that he can learn and continue learning with confidence, develop a healthy venturesomeness and a positive disposition and motivation against the background of a healthy family life.

The following are some of the fields to which the parent can be introduced (Van Schalkwyk, 1990:202-203):

- The various tasks of the school
- The functioning and operation of the school
- The role and task of the school principal, head of department and teacher
- The organizing of the school activities
- The link between the school and department of education
- School and education policy, and the parents' role in this regard
- The inspector/superintendent of education
- The education system as an organizational structure
- The ways and means of parent participation
- The parents' rights and limitations in education
- Possibilities for educational enrichment
- Possibilities for educational support
- The parents' task regarding care of the child
- The possibility for rendering service to the school
- Joint managerial responsibilities

- How to prepare the child for school, to build his self-image, to discipline and motivate the child, and other educative matters of this nature.

3.2 LEGAL DUTIES, RESPONSIBILITIES AND RIGHTS OF PARENTS.

Oosthuizen et.al.: (1994:143) maintain that parents have rights (fundamental or ontic rights) and duties in respect of all aspects of a child's life, development and welfare. The parental rights and duties are based on the fact that a child receives life from his parents and establishes his first and most intimate relationship with them.

The association between the teacher and parents has recently received attention in new legislation, such as that included in the South African Schools Act (R.S.A.: 1996:6) and in provincial legislation where the rights and duties of parents in the relationship have been set out (School Education Act, Gauteng, 1995:5). These Acts mention the following duties of parents:

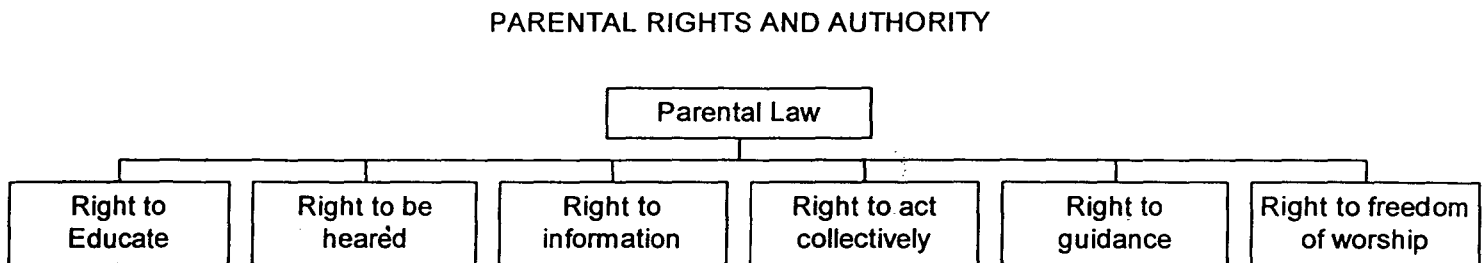
- School attendance of learners. Every parent must see that every learner for whom he/she is responsible attends a school.
- Payment of the school fees. A parent is liable for payment of the school fees determined by the governing body in consultation with the parents – unless the parent has been exempted from such payment.
- Liability for property damage. The parent of a learner at a public school shall be liable for any damages to, or loss of departmental property, which has been caused by the learner.

A parent's right in respect of his child is principally founded in common law (Oosthuizen, et.al. 1994:143). Common law principles stipulate that a parent has a right and a duty to educate, nurture and provide for his child. The right of the parent to educate a child is of a prestatal nature.

This fundamental right implies that a parent is entitled to co-operate with another person (teacher) in respect of his child, to be heard when he speaks on behalf of his child, to make suggestions and decisions. In this respect the following rights can be distinguished (Oosthuizen, et.al. 1994:144).

- The right and duty to educate the child. This right permits the parent to make decisions which affect the child as an individual.
- The right to be heard or to state his case. This right entitles a parent to make suggestions and give advice on the education of his child to the latter's benefit.
- The right to gather information. This right entitles a parent to obtain information regarding his child's school records, performance, behavior, work and the contents of, method used in, and other aspects of his child's education.
- The right to act collectively. This entitles a parent (in addition to his individual right in respect of the education of his child) to be collectively involved as a member of the parent community in decision-making concerning the pupil.
- The right to guardianship, supervision and control. These rights and duties are based on the blood relationship between parent and child. A parent is accordingly obliged to maintain and raise his child by providing food, clothing and shelter, properly manage the child's property and to assist or act on behalf of the child in concluding of contracts.
- The right to religious freedom. This right entitles the parent to instruct his child in religious matters and a philosophy of life and to make choices in this respect.
- The right to be part of the governance of a school. According to the South African Schools Act (RSA, 1996:14) parents have the right to choose parents to represents them on the schools' governing structure. They also have the right to be informed on a regular basis about what the governing body has decided upon on their behalf.

The following diagram (Oosthuizen, et.al. 1994:144) can represent parental rights and authority:



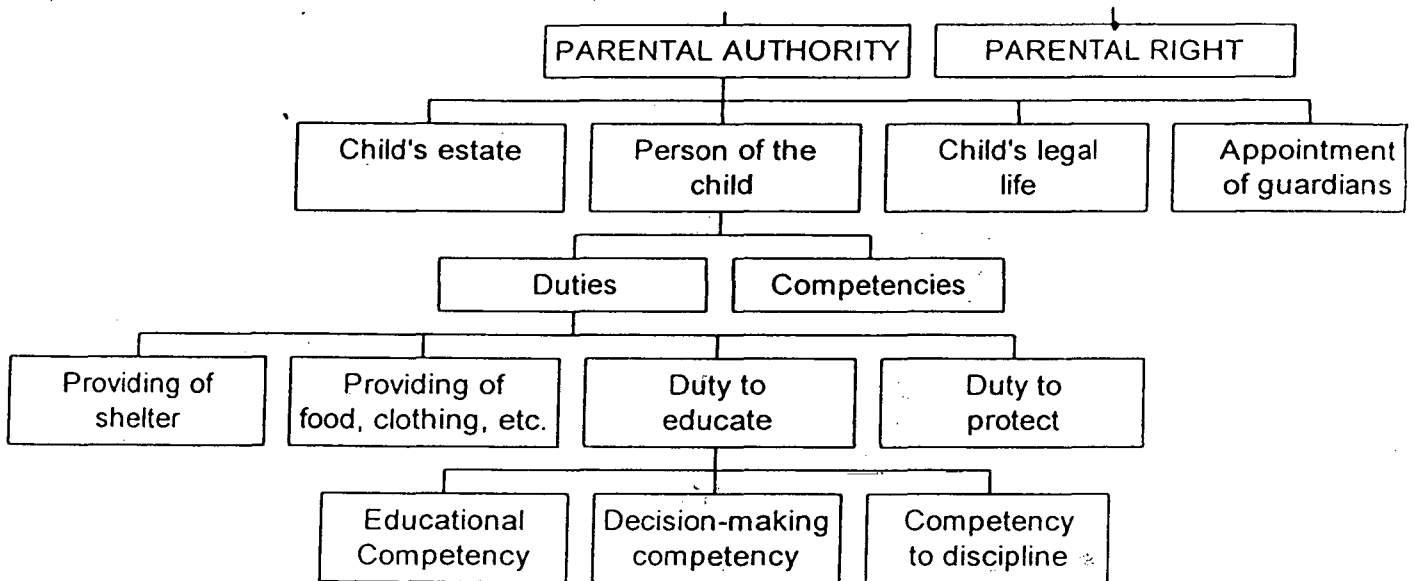
The authority of a parent is determined by:

- Common law
- Legislation
- Case law

A parent's authority in respect of a child entitles the parent to make decisions and give instructions. According to common law principles his duties are to provide his child with the following (Van der Vyver and Joubert, 1988: 610 –613):

- Shelter
- Food, clothing and medical services
- Education and nurturing
- Proper supervision in order to protect his child against dangers and threats.

Parental authority can be depicted as follows (Oosthuizen et.al. 1994:146):



Responsibilities are imposed on parents by the very fact of their parenthood, which should be fulfilled in the light of particular norms and values, which they accept, and in the knowledge that they can be called to account. A very important responsibility of parents is to provide education to the child in accordance with his age, aptitude and potential in an educational institution. This means that parents should assist children with their homework, check their assignments, select suitable book for reading, provide suitable learning environment and listen to their children.

Parental rights are essentially responsibilities for the child's education. In South Africa education is now assuming a new form as a result of greater democratization. Unlike in the past, parents now have the right to control and have say in the education provided by the state. Educators see the contribution of parents in education to be essential and teachers will have to realize that the success of their efforts depends largely on parent confirmation and cooperation.

3.3 SCHOOL EXPECTATIONS OF PARENTS.

Education must be in harmony with the spirit and character of the home in so far as it is acceptable. The school must build on the foundations laid by the family and must strive to attain the same general educational goal.

Van Schalkwyk (1990: 148-149) maintains that the family is an educational community in the sense that it is part of the parents' duty to accept responsibility for the education of the children towards adulthood. It is primarily the task of the family to undertake the initial education and later to transfer this task in part to the school, which must undertake it on behalf of the family. The family retains primary responsibility for the education of its members, even though it is taken over the school. Without the family/parents, the child cannot be successfully led and supported towards full adulthood by the school.

The school educates children on behalf of the parents. Therefore, there should be a close relationship between the family and the school. Because of that close relationship between the family and the school, schools have certain expectations or demands from the parents. The school is regarded as a seat of professional education. To increase the school effectiveness, the teachers (and the school) have same expectations of the parent (Van Schalkwyk 1990:179-180 and Van Wyk 1996:25-26):

- * To ensure that the child reaps the maximum benefit from education by:
 - Offering security and love, which the child needs to enable him or her to venture out into the world.
 - Caring for physical needs by providing sufficient wholesome food, clothing and shelter, and looking after the child's health.
 - Providing the best possible physical environment for study (e.g. a desk, light, own room where possible, magazines, newspapers, etc.).
 - Suppressing and exercising control over activities at home so that the child lives a balanced life and does not neglect important issues.

- To see to it that the child attends school regularly.
 - To ensure that the child contributes in a positive way to his or her own education. The parent must guide, help, support, motivate and stimulate the child's interest in schoolwork.
- To see to it that the child attends school regularly.
 - To ensure that the child contributes in a positive way to his or her own education. The parent must guide, help, support, motivate and stimulate the child's interest in schoolwork.
 - Not to frustrate the teacher's efforts or interrupt the teacher unnecessarily when he or she is teaching.
 - According to Dekker (1986:325-326) to exercise control over the life-view put forward in the school through critical evaluation of educational content, methods and activities. This implies a close collaboration between the parent and teacher.
 - To accept part of the responsibility for the management of the school. The parent can, for instance, play an important part in formulating local policy (for instance, the homework, sport, cultural and scholar policy), selecting and appointing teachers and raising funds.
 - To support and amplify the education the school provides by following up and correcting the child's work, practicing certain skills, revising and repeating work.

3.4 HOME-SCHOOL RELATIONS

Schools cannot proceed in a vacuum without parental support, because the latter is significantly related to:

- Improved student academic achievement
- Improved student attendance at school
- Improved student behavior at school
- Increased community support for school, including human, financial and material resources (Dekker and Lemmer, 1993:154).

The education system in any society does not exist simply for the benefit of the pupils or their parents, or the teachers and the bureaucrats. Education is provided out of the public purse because it is critical for the survival of the entire society. It is a truism that the school (and thus also the teacher) and society (home) are closely related. The only way in which education can be improved in any country is to combine the education focus of home, school and community. Not even the best school can tackle this alone (Rich, 1988:90). Responsible education and teaching require that the parent should become a full partner who will be able to accept co-responsibility. If the school (and thus education) is to be improved, parents who are critical and can make sensible judgements and who do not view changes in the education system as a threat are needed. Parents must be equipped with the necessary facts, the content of the child's curriculum and matters of school policy.

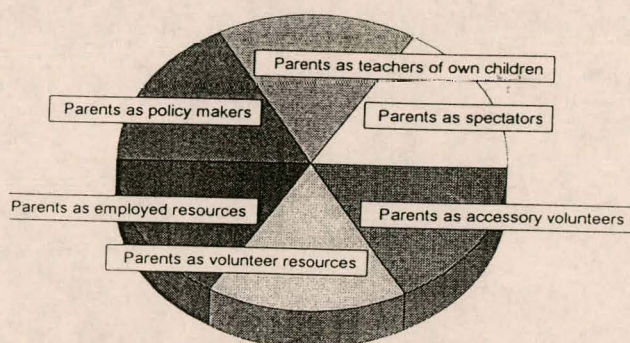
The 1994 Education Act stipulates that pupils are to be educated according to their parent's wishes. It is very important to try to encourage parents to get involved with their children in school and it also very important for the school to strengthen the community culture in the education of the children. The 1981 Act and Circular 1/83 see professional teachers and parents as partners in decision making about pupils (Evarand and Morris 1990:223). Quite apart from the law, good practice requires teachers to cultivate relationship with parents (Mbetse 1993:13). It follows that problems are more easily resolved by parents and teachers together than by either alone.

Dekker and Lemmer (1993:154) state that if anything has been established about school – home relations, it is that there are many ways for schools and homes to co-operate, and that no one way is superior. Parent involvement helps parents discover their strengths, potentialities and talents and to use them for the benefit of themselves, the family as a whole and the school (Morrison, 1978:22). There are perceived benefits of parent involvement. In most cases the benefits apply to what they believe would happen if parents were involved, not to what they have experienced in practice. The following benefit are mentioned by teachers (Ibid):

- Parent involvement lightens the workload of teachers.
- Greater control over children.
- Parents' contribution to problem solving.
- Parents' contribution to a child's schooling.
- Parents' provision of insight into the child's problems.

The following figure sums the ideal home-school relations neatly:

Home School Relations



(Dekker and Lemmer, 1993:159) and (Berger, 1987:95).

3.5 FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

3.5.1 SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS.

Hoover-Dempsey et.al. (1987:419) report, however that their investigation of the variable, socio-economic status, has led them to conclude that while socio-economic status plays a role in parent-teacher relations, the general direction of its influence is difficult to discern. They further offer possible explanation for the correlation that was observed between high socio-economic status and increased parental involvement. Parents in higher socio-economic status realize the importance of education for their

children and feel confident of their right to be involved in the school and, therefore, take a more active role than those parents from in the lower socio-economic status. Also, parents from the higher socio-economic status may view themselves as partners with the educators rather than inferiors or subordinates.

These parents may also feel greater confidence in the value of their contributions to the schools (Hoover Dempsey 1987:430 and Herman and Yeh, 1983:16). Many black illiterate and semi-literate parents fear that their views may be regarded as naïve, uninformed or unimportant (Gabela, 1983:92).

3.5.2 LEVEL OF TEACHER EFFICIENCY

Teacher efficacy is defined by Hoover-Dempsey et.al. (1987:421) as teachers' beliefs that they are effective in teaching, that the children they teach can learn, and there is a body of professional knowledge available to them when they need assistance.

They also maintain that a high level of efficiency implies a sense of professionalism and security in the teaching role. Such confidence would logically enhance teachers' efforts to discuss their teaching programmes and goals with parents, because they would not threatened.

3.5.3 LEVEL OF LITERACY AMONG PARENTS

Banch (1988:82) reports that parents who had attended college were more likely to be active participants and high communicators. He further maintains that this factor in itself does not account for the differences in parental involvement found among black schools. Instead, a combination of parent and school factors seems to influence parental involvement.

3.5.4 CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC DIFFERENCES

Lynch and Stein (1987:106) believe that the way in which parents and school personnel communicate will depend on the linguistic factor. Language is essential in a forum where information is to be exchanged, considered, and acted upon. Linguistic differences, therefore poses a practical problem which understandably deters parents from involving themselves in education.

3.6 NECESSITY, VALUE AND ADVANTAGES OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Parents remain the most potentially valuable resource in education and to leave unharnessed this largely untapped resource would need a great deal of justification (Engle, 1998:51). Today it is widely acknowledged that parental co-operation with the school is neither a quick fix nor a 'luxury' (Henderson, 1988:148). It is generally accepted that when educators and parents work together in a partnership in the education of their children the productivity in the education of their children increases. But it is not enough to merely concede to this fact. It is essential that schools recognize this fact and utilize this resource effectively. The major part of educating the child becomes the responsibility of the parents, and the school has undertaken to fulfil only a facet of the parents' task. Therefore, schools and educators are basically serving the community and the parents. As such, the parents become the clients of the educators.

Parental involvement is not only a matter of necessity in terms of what can be attained in education but also a matter of principle. The parent, as primary educator, is responsible for their children's well being, their future and their education. It is therefore, not logical to exclude or limit the parent, who is the primary educator, from the formal education of the child (Van Schalkwyk, 1990:19-20).

Parental involvement in formal education is guaranteed in terms of the South African School Act No.84 of 1996 which sets out clearly the parents' rights and obligations in

respect of their children's schooling. The United Nations Declarations of the Rights of the Child (1959):

“The best interest of the child shall be the guiding principle of those responsible and this lies in the first place with the parents”. In brief parents may be seen as the school's prime legal clients until the child leaves school (Macbeth, 1989:5).

A sound partnership between the business world and education has a wide variety of benefits for the school, its pupils and teachers, but also for business and industry (Pretorius, 1998:34 and Oosthuizen, 1994:136).

The school and the teacher derive the following advantages from parental involvement (Engle, 1998: 54-55):

- Improvement in communication.
- Improvement in unity and co-ordination of education.
- The family creates the basis for successful formal education.
- Improved positive attitudes and community support.
- Co-operation promotes mutual respect and confidence.
- Positive criticism improves teaching and learning.
- Insight into child's family background promotes understanding
- Improvement in child's behavior and school attendance.
- Material support for school (Van Schalkwyk, 1990: 25-32).
- Learning and behavior problems among children are best solved when parents and teachers co-operate constructively.
- Parental involvement in schools provides parent's an opportunity for personal growth and fulfillment (Ibid 1990:25-32).

Engle (1998:55) and Gestwick (1988:82-86) list the following benefits from a positive parent-teacher relationship:

For Parents

- Feeling of support in the difficult task of parenting.
- Knowledge and skills gained by parents to help them in child rearing.
- Enhance parental esteem.

For Teachers

- Increased knowledge about the child.
- Increased feeling of competence following parental support
- Parents as additional resource.

For children

- Increased security in new environment
- Enhances positive self-concept
- Sharing of knowledge benefits child.

3.7 WAYS AND TYPES OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

The basic obligation of parents is their responsibility for the children's health, safety, supervision, discipline and guidance is undeniably parental involvement. Failure to do so constitutes a criminal offence and falls within the boundaries of the welfare organization and the law.

3.7.1 WAYS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

3.7.1.1 COMMUNICATION

In order for schools to involve parents meaningfully there has to be a healthy system of communication. The parent-school contact may take the form of notes to parents, conferences, home visits and joint participation in workshops and classes.

Other forms of communication include telephoning parents and the school newsletter (Dulaney, 1987:49).

3.7.1.2 PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOL DECISION-MAKING, GOVERNANCE AND ADVOCACY

This would include specifically parental participation as well as involvement. It appears that the pivotal point in school administration around which parents' concern, lie in decision-making (Mitchell, 1985:2-3). Ornstein (1980:82) connotes the formation of advisory committees or groups that may operate at various levels within the system.

3.7.2 TYPES OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

The aim of School-to-Home communications is to:

- Inform parents about the school: calendars and schedules; special events; channels of communication; school goals, programs, services; school rules, codes, policies; open house.
- Inform parents about their children: report and grades, test scores; informal evaluations, teacher-parent conferences (Dekker, 1994:13).

3.7.2.1 PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AT THE SCHOOL

Parents may assist teachers and students with lessons, on school trips, at class parties or other classroom activities. They can also assist administrators, teachers and staff in school activities and attend workshops, discussion groups, and training sessions for parents.

3.7.2.2 PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN LEARNING ACTIVITIES AT HOME

Parent's involvement in learning activities at home may help in developing the child's social and personal skills and thus can enrich the education as a whole (Dekker, 1994:13).

3.8 TEACHERS' ROLE IN INVOLVING PARENTS IN EDUCATION

“Parents’ highly emotional interest in their own children becomes a strength; they will support the person who supports their child” (Engle, 1998:69).

The parent is the person in education who has all the natural advantages in the educational environment and is the one who knows the child better. McCaleb (1994:40) agrees that the responsibility of the teacher is to initiate and to nurture this relation (home-school relationship). Wolfendale (1989:114) points out that the Fish Report of 1985, referred to the need for in-service training for professionals to work more effectively with parents.

Katz (1995:18) and Engle (1998:71) state that parental involvement in American schools is exceptionally high because principals encourage consultation and open communication between staff members and parents. This they do by allowing easy access to the schools: parents meetings, teacher consultations, workshop sessions, fundraising projects, etc. At these meetings the teachers together with the principals take the opportunity to market their schools to parents in order that they come to regard them as their schools. Such meetings afford principals the opportunity to inform parents on various aspects concerning the running of their schools. This attitude also encourages parents to respect the principal’s leadership.

Since the teacher acts as an initiator in forming the partnership with parents, the concept of professionalism is redefined. Teachers start viewing themselves as leaders of an educational team, using their special skills and knowledge to enlist the help of parents, expecting to exchange information with them and consider the opinion (Engle 1998:71). Administrative and organizational support and leadership from the school sets the tone and atmosphere for parental involvement programs and strategies. Support may also come in the form of clearly sated philosophy that values and welcomes the contribution of parents in the educational process.

The teacher's efforts are seen as an empowering agent of parents as stated by Kruger (1985:183) when saying: This shows that parents will come with their ideas and experiences that will significantly contribute to education. It is of utmost importance for parents and teachers to consider that the children's success depends mostly on the working together of both a parent and a teacher.

It is important for teachers to communicate with parents by means of letters, journals and the telephone to improve the parent-teacher relationship. Informal meetings can also be held with parents. Home visiting establishes a parent-teacher relationship and the teacher is able to observe the child out of school environment.

Teachers must also invite parents to the classrooms. According to Berger (1981:107), visits by parents to the classroom allow parents to be acquainted with their child's educational environment. The teacher must give himself time to listen to parents, as it is essential for improving relationships. The school (teacher) carries a responsibility to empower parents to understand their involvement in education and to make their participation effective and visible.

3.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter focuses on the theoretical perspective on parental involvement in education. There is increasing recognition of the tangible benefits that result from actively enlisting the support and involvement of parents in their children's education. Therefore, parents are a valuable education resource. The role of teachers as facilitators of parental involvement has been acknowledged.

The rights and duties of parents in the education of their children were discussed. The necessity of parental involvement was seen as a principal, legal requirement and as a right.

The value of parental involvement is discussed in some detail. This chapter also made reference to the factors influencing of parental involvement in education. This includes

socio-economic factors, level of teacher efficacy, level of literacy among parents and cultural and linguistic differences. Departing from the premise that one has to first understand the problems associated with parental involvement, the researcher has discussed the barriers to parental involvement from the perspective of the school and the family.

The chapter that follows shall focus on the causes of lack of parental involvement in education. Attention will also be focused on strategies employed by teachers and principals in trying to bring about active involvement and participation of parents in education.

CHAPTER FOUR

CAUSES OF LACK OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

At this present time parents as partners in education find themselves under tremendous pressure and it becoming increasingly difficult for them to play their partnership role. Steyn, et.al. (1997:101) state that the deterioration of family structures and the undermining of parental authority have alarming consequences for the parent as a partner in education. They further maintain that recent years provided a marked change in regard to the image, function and structures of the traditional family. Because of the destructive influences within contemporary society, the place of the parental home as the single most important formative influence on the child's life, no longer comes to its right. Family life in many respects deteriorated so that today it is economically, socially, emotionally and educationally highly vulnerable (Ibid, 1997:101). There are many factors prejudicial to the function of the parent as a partner in education.

Eccles and Harold (1996:11) argue that school personnel may either facilitate or inhibit parent involvement by their own beliefs and attitude about parent involvement. Van Wyk (1996:271) supports this statement by saying that this appears to be true of low-income neighbourhoods where parents are seen as part of the problem in educating their children, rather than a resource. He further stated that parents and teachers both observed a lack in one another's behavior and responsibility. The lack of communication and trust between parents and teachers who tend to view their roles as exclusive of each other are thus reflected. Moreover, where teachers hold negative perceptions of parents' desire for involvement, it should be noted that these are the very areas the school should be addressing if they are committed to a policy of parent involvement (Steyn et.al.1997: 271 - 272). It is stressed that teachers appear to have an unrealistic notion of what constitutes successful parental involvement.

The term parental involvement has a wide scope. Some view it as a sincere interest in the teaching of the child at home, others views it as a service to the school during school functions, the maintenance of school furnitures and helping in certain administrative tasks. On the other hand, a very popular view is that parental involvement is the meeting of parents with the respective educators in order to discuss the scholastic progress of the pupils and to get to know the educators of their children. Another view is that parental involvement is acting as a member of a body such as parent-teacher associations/parent-teacher-student associations. Some teachers feel that it is the parents duty to ensure that their children are clothed, fed and that they attend school, which are incorrect perceptions.

Some educators see parents as persons who may undermine the professional status of educators if they are allowed to be involved in the education of their children and they are as therefore very reluctant to encourage parental involvement (Van Schalkwyk, 1990:34). This view is fast changing. Education cannot be handled either by parents or teachers alone. Parents, as the primary educators must involve themselves in the education of their children as partners and not as competitors in the education process. Parents are equal partners in the education process, and they remain the primary educators of their children.

The causes of lack of parental involvement in education are both diverse and complex. Cullingford (1985:7) refers to the fragility of the relationship between the parent and the teacher. The relationship between the parent and the teacher is constantly under strain.

Causes of lack of parental involvement can be divided into the problems experienced by parents and those experienced by teachers.

4.2 CAUSES OF LACK OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION

Many researchers have identified a wide variety of factors that may inhibit healthy relations between the school and parents. Engle (1998:61-63) Gestwicki (1987:91-105),

Macbeth (1989:23), Munn (1993:109), Smit (1993:48-87) and Van Schalkwyk (1990:47, 57) identified the following problems with parent-teacher relations:

- Time (working parents)
- Distance or location of school
- Problematic attitudes (teachers and parents alike)
- Communication problems.

4.3 PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED BY PARENTS

4.3.1 LIMITED TIME

School, ought to understand that lack of participation by parents does not mean they are neglecting their responsibilities. They often simply may not have the time. In their research Jackson and Cooper (1992:36) found that parents may be concerned and interested but do not have time.

Van Wyk (1998:277) states that most studies on parent involvement point to the limited time available to most people today as one of the causes of lack of parental involvement in education of their children. There are many reasons why this is possible in rural schools. Parents knock off very late and they travel many kilometers from work. On the other hand at weekends parents are also very busy with things such as funerals, weddings, parties and so on. Because of limited time the parents do not have time to come together with teachers to discuss their children's problem. Jowet and Bangisky (1988:42-43) pointed out that there are strong indications that lack of time and apprehensive of parents and teachers posed a major obstacle in involving parents in education.

In the United States of America many parents face competing demands of work and family life and feel mistrust and anxiety when dealing with school staff. Parents are so involved with staying alive and being able to keep up economically, there is little or no energy left to devote to children - much less time spend teaching, disciplining, etc.

(Epstein and Becker 1982:111). The time they have is spent being loving, lenient or feeling guilty for not having time or energy to help their children. Some of the children have no motivation to study. Many parents whose children attend school are also too busy raising their own little children in the family, cleaning house and doing adult work at home because their parents are out trying to make ends meet (Ibid 1982:111). In these ways parents do not have time to involve themselves in the education of their children. Parents work long hours and get home late. The same applies to parents in the Northern Province.

4.3.2 PARENTS' LACK OF EDUCATION/ILLITERACY

Van Wyk (1996:274) feels that parent involvement in schools is not enough and describes as "an empty space between the school and the parents". He attributes lack of parental involvement mainly to the fact that most of the parents are uneducated. Parents do not help their kids because of illiteracy and they fear to come to school. They don't even understand their children's problems because of illiteracy and at the end of the year they all want to see their children pass. Parents who had attended college are more likely to be active participants and high communicators (Banch 1988:82).

Van Wyk (1997:27) points out that most parents in South Africa do not understand the importance of education because most of them never had opportunity of going to school. She goes further on saying that although it is true that 9 to 15 Million South Africans are functionally illiterate, many studies have shown that this need not preclude parental involvement.

4.3.3 POOR COMMUNICATION

To involve parents meaningfully there ought to be a system of communication. This communication also takes into account parents' level of literacy and the language they prefer.

Many school administrators do not get profiles of the community with regard to understanding how and when parents may be reached and how to fine-tune their communication. This usually causes problems on the side of parents. There is a lack of communication between teachers and parents, which greatly hampers the establishment of partnership between the home and the school.

The communication is often inadequately designed and thus too prescriptive and negative. Bastion (1986:15) says there is a particular style of talking and writing which is the characteristic of schools. These types of communication are often not suitable for addressing parents.

4.3.4 THE NEGATIVE ATTITUDE OF EDUCATORS

Some parents are negative towards the school and teachers and parental involvement is often associated with aggressive or negative encounters with educators. Some parent are not interested in becoming involved in the education of their children and they don't care about their children. Even if some parents come to parents meeting one will to found them irresponsible in the education of their children.

Educators have different attitudes towards parents of different economic groups. The educators unwittingly differentiate on the basis of income. McLanghlin and Shields (1987:157) make a distinction between advantaged parents and low-income parents and these stimulate uneven parental involvement. Teachers usually see black parents as uncaring, unsympathetic and ignorant of the value of education for their children. These negative attitudes by teachers do little to elevate the situation; it makes the parent more unwilling to take part in the education process (Van Schalkwyk 1983:18). Parents from poor backgrounds usually get negative reactions from educators. According to Van Wyk (1996:273) teachers and principals describe parents as negative or uncooperative. Most educators tend to have a negative attitude because of the parent's lack of knowledge and the poverty of the community.

4.3.5 TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL STATUS

Teachers indicated that parents tend to place responsibility for school matters on the teachers' shoulders. Parents are unwilling to accept responsibility for school matters. Remarks such as the following were made in this regard: "Our community thinks that the teachers must do everything, they think the school belongs to the teachers, not to them" (Van Wyk 1997:27). Parents on the other hand feel intimidated by the school, its staff members, the organized student movement and the prevailing political climate. Parents are afraid of the school. Most teachers link the fact that parents feel intimidated by the school to the parents' lack of education. Parents feel intimidated by the fact that they do not understand what is happening in schools that they withdraw from all schools most of them being illiterate. Parents think educators are going to ignore them because of their illiteracy.

4.3.6 PARENTS' PERSONAL BACKGROUND AND LACK OF EXPERIENCE

Kelly (1974:10) points out that education of our children now requires expertise, which is beyond the comprehension of the average parents. Parents with poor background find it very difficult to ask for advice or talk openly to educators. This is because they have a great respect for teacher' expertise and professional quantities.

Therefore, parents leave the education of their children to the school (Van Schalkwyk, 1983:18). This fear of parents for teachers begins right from the days when they were young. Most parents lack the necessary knowledge of involving themselves in the education of their children.

One of the most important factors in the failure of parental involvement in South Africa is the lack of knowledge and experience in working with teachers. Parents very often blame teachers for the child's shortcomings and openly declare that educators ought to be doing more in some way or another. What the parents know of their child is gained from the day to day of their lives and thus have a very little time in observing of their children

in their relationship with educators. It must also be known that parents have received no formal training in their relationship with educators (Cullingford, 1985: 76-77).

4.3.7 STRESSFUL CONDITIONS AT HOME

There are many reasons for the high level of stress that is experienced by parents nowadays. Most parents are almost occupied in their daily lives. Berger (1987:219) points out that there are lot of problems which can be experienced by parents, include among others, unemployment, family problems and illness which make it difficult for parents to be actively involved in the education of their children.

4.3.8 LACK OF PRIVACY

Munn (1985: 107) says that most parents complained about the lack of privacy in the conversations with teacher. There is a limited amount of time available for the conversation between parents and educators. The family is being robbed of its privacy as their it is exposed to social workers, educators, psychiatrists and priest (Lightfoot 1981:98).

4.4 PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED BY TEACHERS

4.4.1 LACK OF TRAINING

Van Wyk (1997:28) in the research conducted in Mamelodi and Atteridgeville, two townships in the vicinity of Pretoria, says that teachers have little or no experience of parental involvement. She further says that one teacher with 35 years of teaching experience said: "I personally have no experience of parental involvement".

Van Wyk (1996:276) sees the lack of parental involvement, as stemming from the fact that teacher is not trained to work with parents. He further says one teacher told him that

they are only taught how to manage a class and controlling books, and parents are not part of the package of management.

These are no workshops for teachers. Teachers have no knowledge and experience in working with parents. Teachers very often blame parents for the child's shortcomings and openly declare that parents ought to be doing more in some way or another.

4.4.2 UNREASONABLE EXPECTATIONS AND PREJUDICES OF PARENTS

Parents usually have high expectations for their children. If for example, the father or mother was good in Mathematics at school, he or she expects his or her child to be also good in that subject. If the child does perform poorly he or she blames the teacher. This brings about the bad relationship between the teachers and parents. Van Schalkwyk (1990:48) points out that the unhealthy relationship between parents and teachers makes it difficult to effectively involve such parents in the education of their children.

Some parents are negative and even aggressive towards the school and teachers. Parents bring to the school their own experience of the school. Parents' attitude may in his way makes the teacher's task of involving parent in the education process very difficult. Some parents who are rich may look down upon teachers and feel that their social status is higher than that of teachers, which on the other hand can make the relationship between teachers and parents sour.

4.4.3 TEACHER COMPETENCY IN THE HANDLING OF PARENTS

Because teachers are not trained in involving parents in the education of their children, they find it very difficult to involve parents in education (Van Schalkwyk 1983:16). Teachers have a limited view of the role parents can play in school matters. They do not make parents feel welcome at school. Teachers also on the other hand do not facilitate parental involvement in their schools. It seems as if some teachers are not willing to participate parents and are also incompetent.

4.4.4 THE DYNAMIC NATURE OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Parental involvement is dynamic in nature (Bastian 1986:20). Because of this parents may want different ways on which they can be involved in the education of their children by teachers. Teachers sometimes have no knowledge on how to involve parents in the education of their children.

4.4.5 PREFERENTIAL TREATMENT EXPECTED OF TEACHERS BY PARENTS

Beck (1989:12) criticizes parents who want favours from teachers because the parents help in schools on a regular basis. Those parents want preferential treatment in case their children are involved in misdemeanors in schools. They do not want their children to be disciplined as all the other, but teachers have to be lenient towards them because the parents help and support the school on a regular basis. This may at times give teacher problems.

There is sometimes also a lack of cooperation and trust between teachers and parents, which greatly hampers the establishment of a partnership between the home and the school. Most parents do not know what is happening in schools.

Van Wyk (1997:28-29) lists the following practical problems of parental involvement in education mentioned by teachers in her interviews with teachers:

- Parents work long hours and get home late
- Children often do not stay with their parents, but are in the care of grandparents, or older brothers and sisters
- There is a lot of poverty in the community, making parents afraid to become involved in school activities, for fear that they will have to spend money
- Violent situations in some villages or townships make it impossible to attend meetings which are held at night

- Many parents do not have transport to the school which makes it difficult for them to attend school functions
- Single parents often find it difficult to become involved in school activities.

4.5 ROLE PLAYED BY TEACHERS IN INVOLVING PARENTS

Firstly teachers themselves must be empowered in order to empower parents. Teachers with empowered parents serves as human resource leather with increased value on two roles: mediator and motivator. Engle (1998:71) says that as a motivator the teacher must encourage parents to get involved in unaccustomed areas. As a mediator, the effective teacher buffers conflict when necessary and works towards consensus, while encouraging dialogue in a culture of give and take.

Stacy (1991:33) states that parent's highly emotional interest in their own children becomes a strength, and they will support the person who supports their child. The teacher is the most important key to quality education according to (Badenhorst et.al. 1993: 4-8 and Robbins et.al. 1994:14).

The teacher must act as an initiator in forming the partnership with parents. Teachers ought to view themselves as leaders of an educational team, using their special skills and knowledge to enlist the help of parents, expecting to exchange information with them and consider their opinions (Gestwicki 1987:110).

The school (teachers and principal) must open its doors to the parent community by displaying willingness to hold joint discussions and solve educational problems. The ideal situation is to give the parents the opportunity to be present during the teaching of their children. This fosters an understanding of how difficult the task of the teachers is and the parents are then made aware of the fact that conditions at school differ radically from home circumstances (Dekker 1994:7).

Teachers should never be placed on a pedestal, beyond the reach of the parents, because this could for one thing create the impression that they are either arrogant or scared.

It will not detract from the teacher's professional status if he or she communicates with the parents at their own level. On the contrary, respect and confidence are likely to be won (Ibid).

It is self-evident that certain conditions will have to be met for cooperation between the school and the parents are to be achieved in practice. According to Dekker (1994:7) it is important that:

- Parents and Members of representative councils should be strongly motivated in favour of partnership and should even be willing to serve the school in the free time.
- The partners should have sufficient 'expertise' so that any problems the school may experience can be tackled and solved effectively.
- Everyone involved should have adequate communicative and cooperative skills, so that conflicts can be kept to a minimum and solved as fast as possible.
- The formal advisory and decision making procedure do not involve an excessive workload for the participants.
- Monopolistic groups should not be allowed to form on school boards, since this interferes with the pedagogic freedom which is necessary to teachers.
- No clumsy, formal organizational structure should be created which would hamper opinion formation and promote school bureaucrats.
- Dekker (1986:769) is of the opinion that the teacher's qualities of leadership, which should be harnessed in the interest of the smooth running of school activities, ought to be retained.

Dekker (1994:20) points out that all parents want to help their children, but, for a variety of reasons, many that are not already involved feel helpless to do so. Teacher can convince parents to become involved in different ways and the following ways can be included (Ibid):

- Bilingual media campaigns on the important role of the home in educating children.
- Encourage ministers and other respected leaders to stress the importance of this route.
- Family learning centers in schools, store fronts and churches that offer help (that is bilingual when necessary) to parents wanting to help their children learn.
- Bilingual hot-lines for parents who need help in assisting their children with their homework.
- Learning activities created by the schools that parents can use at home with their children.

In order for the teacher to enhance a relationship with parents the following key concepts are very important: mutual trust, understanding, respect, frankness, support, encouragement and assistance, loyalty, cooperation, communication, sense of equality, and awareness of common goals. The creating of an inviting, warm and cordial school atmosphere encourages parents to come to the school and makes them feel well welcome and at ease. The following, according to Dekker (1994:24), could enhance such a climate:

- The conduct of the staff
- A positive attitude on the part of the staff.
- A neat and friendly lobby.
- A room where parents can be entertained.

- A neat and well-equipped principal's office which leaves parents with an impression of professionalism.

Contact opportunities such as parents' evenings, open days and scheduled appointments with specific parents can help reach uninvolved parents. Through contact with individual parents or group of parents, the school can extend a helping hand to improve the quality of parental guidance at home.

It is the duty of the teachers to see to it that communication between parents and schools improve. Dekker (1994:30) gives the following advices as appeared in an education brochure for an American School. Put the school's name, telephone number, street address, and mailing address on formal communications, especially those that ask for a response. At the beginning of each year, send home a card with that information on it, plus names parents should know, e.g. the principal, school secretary, and others as appropriate to the grade level. Dekker (1994:31) further gives the following guidelines to teachers when they communicate with parent:

- Recognize that schools and homes have shared goals.
- Respect all parents and communicate that respect.
- Acknowledge the changes that are taking place in the family.
- Understand the different types of school-family communication and the advantages and limitations of each.
- Tailor communications to your listeners and readers.

4.5.1 THE ROLE PLAYED BY TEACHERS IN PARENT-TEACHER ASSOCIATIONS

According to Masalesa (1996:12) and Pugh and De Arth (1984 :177) schools (teachers) need parents' input in a process of generating ideas and making decisions.

Teachers ought to guide parents to take part in the education process. Teachers and parents are all concerned about the education of their children (Hattingh, 1987:19).

Teachers ought to support parents to participate fully in the activities of the school for the improvement of education.

Teachers must strive to create adequate awareness of what parents can do as far as parental involvement is concerned. Teachers can offer training in the form of conferences, workshops and seminars to help parents to acquire knowledge of how to become involved in the education of their children. The role of the teacher ought to be a supplementary and supportive one. Masalesa (1996:13) emphasizes that the quality of partnership is enhanced when teachers work hand in hand with parents.

Teachers can invite parents to help with the drafting of school policies. Teachers ought to provide parents with guidelines to understand the curriculum and the school policy's structure. By doing this, parents will then become joint decision-makers together with teachers. This needs expertise and experience on the side of the teacher. Teachers ought to encourage parent's presentation and parents to be teachers of other parents to teach others to read and write and to become involved and participate in educational activities of the school.

4.5.2 THE ROLE PLAYED BY TEACHERS DURING HOME VISITS

Masalesa (1996:15) points out that the purpose of home visiting is to help teachers with the unknown and unresolved problem teachers' face at school. She further says that home visiting is also a way to reach parents who have no telephone and who most of the time are unable to attend meetings, workshops and seminars intended for parents by the school. It also caters for parents of children from disadvantaged backgrounds. Teacher can then establish a parent-teacher relationship and observe the child out of school environment. By means of home visits, teachers give valuable information to parents about their children.

Home visits also prepare children and parents for school especially where families have problems, stress or adverse circumstances. It is also the duty of teachers to make parents

feel at ease during their visit. It is at this time where teachers discuss the children progress at school and recommend and show parents how to establish a routine task (Masalesa 1996:15).

Teachers have an opportunity to guide parents and ask them to embark on a project together with their children in a joint venture. Where necessary teachers must praise parents for the good work done by them.

4.5.3 THE TEACHERS' ROLE IN CLASSROOM VISITS

Parents must also know what is happening in classrooms. Teachers should allow parents to come to the classrooms and to be acquainted with the classroom environment. The help of the teachers is needed in this regard Masalesa (1996:19) mentions that the responsibility remains with the teacher to use professional expertise to enable parents to discover and develop any contribution they can bring to the classroom. The teacher has to encourage and give credit to the contribution the parents may bring to the classroom. Parents ought to know what is expected of them in the classroom beforehand.

4.5.4 THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER IN INFORMAL MEETINGS

Teachers and parents ought to communicate for the smooth running of the school. Masalesa (1996:26) says that the mood and style of relationship should not be formal. Therefore it is the responsibility of the teacher to make the meeting informal. They must create a relaxed atmosphere where the parent can participate freely in any conversation. There are many ways which teachers can induce informal meetings and social events for example, where parents could be invited by teachers to volunteer for positions. It is the responsibility of the teacher not to limit or confine visiting hours of parents to certain hours, but to try to accommodate parents.

Badenhorst (1993:111) and Engle (1998:59) mentions that educators have to promote parental involvement by:

- Explaining to parents what their respective functions entail.
- Playing the role of facilitator between the parents and school.
- Interpreting the educational desires parents have for their children and make provision for them.
- Negotiating the norms and values to be accepted in the school.
- Bringing about a sound relationship and acceptance of a common set of values by both the parents and the school.

Van der Westhuizen (1994:438) concludes that teachers should become sensitive to maintaining healthy school-community relationship and in fact good teaching efforts are a prerequisite for this. Teachers should also become involved in community activities by means of which communication can be promoted.

4.6 STRATEGIES FOR INVOLVING PARENTS IN EDUCATION

The possibilities for parents to become directly or indirectly involved as partners in school activities are almost inexhaustible. Engle (1998:67) is of the opinion that possible strategies will empower both parents and educators with the capacity to:

- Reduce the gap between the school and the parental home (overcome fear and negative past experience).
- Gain insight into school activities in order to counteract any sense of alienation (a strong feature of the past).
- Engage in the activities that will promote and sustain a positive culture of learning.
- Enhance the learning potential of their children and themselves.
- Refocus on good parenting as a foundation for successful learning,
- Develop strategies to manage conflict
- Even out of differences and achieving equality of opportunity in education
- Promote the understanding that learning is lifelong activity.

Strategies for parental involvement depend on how well it matches up with individual parents' needs. It is necessary to lessen the distance between home and school and look at possibilities to involve parents in school activities. Berger (1987:95-96), Pearson (1990:15) and Dekker and Lemmer (1994:158-159) are of the opinion that parents can play an important part as:

- Spectators who merely observe what the school as the authority figure does with their children.
- Accessory volunteers (or audience) who provide treats and create parties with involvement geared only to a specific time and task after which they withdraw from the education environment to await the next assignment
- Resources (workers in the classroom) in the school's instructional program, developing resource materials and curriculum ideas or occasionally sharing their expertise.
- Policy makers (participators) whose decisions directly affect the schools their own children attend.
- Teachers of their children from birth to childhood. Some schools use parents as teacher aides, depending on their qualifications and availability.

Parents are seen by Dekker (1994:159), Hendersen et.al. (1986:3) and Kindered et.al. (1976:130-131) as:

- Partners, performing obligations for their child's education and social development.
- Collaborators and problem solvers, reinforcing the school's efforts with their child and helping to work out solutions to problems, such as discipline or safety.
- Audience, attending and appreciating the school's as well as their child's performances and productions.
- Supporters, providing volunteer assistance to teacher, the parent organization and to other parents, aiding on field trips by serving as chaperones, checking attendance, exercising accident safeguards, and taking part in follow-up activities.

- Advisors and co-decision makers, providing input on school policy and programs through membership in ad hoc permanent governing bodies. They can be members of textbook of textbook committees, report card committees, and others dealing with improvement of teaching.

4.6.1 STRATEGIES TO ORIENTATE PARENTS

Dekker and Lemmer (1994:176) say that as adult learners, parents have an exceptionally onerous task when learning the new skills of bringing up children without many useful guidelines. The best kind of adult learning takes place at the time when it is asked for, in conjunction with other parent-learners in the same state, with a slightly more experienced practitioner leading discussions and with opportunities to practice the new skills under supervision. Adult education has yet to provide suitable courses that meet all these criteria and to examine seriously parents' needs for support and reassurance. There are inexhaustible opportunities for enticing parents to the schools so that they can be informed and equipped by the schools for their task and so that their relationship with the school staff can be improved. A wide variety of general methods, techniques and activities need to be applied.

4.6.1.1 WORKSHOPS

The organization of parental guidance through workshops, which are, designed to explain the academic and social activities of the school to parents and to show them the methods for supporting their children's school performance is very useful. Informed parents and teachers can present workshops for their own parent school communities on a voluntary basis.

Workshops must be aimed at addressing the main goals of parent involved and it can be successfully utilized in introducing parents to the new subject terminologies and orientating them in respect of subject syllabuses.

Workshops and parent training sessions are means of helping parents create home learning activities and dealing with child development issues. A popular type is the 'make it, take it' workshop where parents make inexpensive educational aids and learn how to use them at home (Dekker and Lemmer 1994:177).

In workshops parents can be divided into groups for formal lectures or informal discussions followed by a video or film show and then followed by a discussion session. During meetings, parents could compile workbooks and manuals for other parents.

4.6.1.2 VOLUNTEERING

Engle (1998:87) states that parents can volunteer as:

- Supporters: providing voluntary assistance to teachers, the governing body and to other parents, helping with social events such as concerts, festivals, field trips, etc.
- Learners: providing information about their children's efforts and co-operating in generating solutions to problems such as discipline or safety, promoting dialogue which is mutually revealing, leading to an educational understanding of the parents and the social understanding of the teacher.
- Helpers: providing assistance in the classroom, e.g. setting out apparatus, supervising games; as a teacher aide or standing in for a teacher who is absent and listening to children read and reading to them; help with school security; help with extracurricular activities.
- Policy-makers: as governors, providing guidance and leadership in formulating policy such as the school's admission policy, developing a code of conduct for learners, fundraising for the school; encouraging involvement of other parents.
- Presenters of workshops: schools should encourage parents to arrange and become involved in talks, seminars and workshops throughout the year on various topics such as parenting skills, dealing with learning problems, discipline, effective study methods, parent-child reading programs, parent-child reading programs, peace education, multicultural education, motivating one's child, sex education etc.

Parents can be asked to accompany their children on tours and choir outings. Van Wyk (1996:268) sees the presence of the parents more for 'moral background', adding that the teachers are good at looking after the children and seeing to it that none get lost.

4.6.1.3 CONFERENCES

Dekker and Lemmer (1994:177-178) point out that, constructive, practical discussion evenings or educational excursions (together with children) may be arranged. Parents should thus, be prepared for conferences. Each parent must be provided with concrete information about the goals set for the conference. It is advisable to suggest things for them to think about before the meeting. A proper conference setting must be created to ensure a productive, two-way interactive situation, which will enhance sensitivity to the needs of all the parties involved.

4.6.1.4 REGISTER CLASS PARENT GROUPS

The most effective co-operation between parents and the school usually takes place on the level of the register class. Dekker and Lemmer (1994:178) say that this concept has been tested and proven to be a major breakthrough in regaining and enhancing the interest of the school-parent community in the various states of the former West Germany. It is here in the smaller, more intimate group away from the mass of parents with their divergent questions and needs, that parents feel comfortable, are more inclined to share their opinions with one another and where everyone who wishes to, has a turn to speak. A register class parent committee possesses much latent potential, which is possibly never discovered and exploited in the larger context of the parent community.

Within a register class group many knowledgeable parents from a variety of professions within the community are drawn together. Thus, if parents are initially involved in school activities in smaller, cosier groups at the level of the register class, they will make more significant contributions and will also support general school activities more readily. The formation of register class groups allows parents to make contact with one

another in a pleasant way so that they eventually learn to know the parents of their children's classmates. Thus they discover that they share particular common needs (and problems) and are striving for a common goal.

4.6.1.5 PARENTS AS PARTNERS IN TEACHING AND DECISION MAKING

Engle (1998:90) points out that parents are valuable education resource.

- **Involving parents in their children's homework.**

Homework is an extension of the learning process, which takes place in the classroom. Some ways in which a parent can assist include:

- Homework is a way of teaching self-discipline. Parents should therefore see to it that the child does his or her homework at a set time and preferably at a set place.
- Even if the parent is unable to judge the content of the homework, just looking at how carefully and how neatly homework has been done, will give some indication of how successfully it has been completed.
- Pupils should be encouraged to study for a text or examination well in advanced.
- Parents should be warned against doing the homework for the child.

- **Parents as partners in reading schemes**

Children must read at home with their parents. Pretorius et.al. (1997:31-32) are of the opinion that parental involvement in a child's reading proved to be even more effective than extracurricular involvement with teachers. They further states that even in schools where there is a genuine parental involvement and two-way communication parents are not always seen (or see themselves) as colleagues. This perception is wrong. Parents and teachers are equal partners in the education of the child.

4.7 CONCLUSION

In this preceding chapter problems experienced by teachers and parents were identified with regard to the education of the children. Teachers together with parents play a significant role in the education of the children. Therefore, they must work as partners. Teachers on the other hand should not see parents as competitors but as equal partners. What the parents expect from the school and what the school expect from the parents is always changing, and thus, both the parents and teachers must be empowered in this regard. There should be two-way communication between the parents and the school and there should no longer be a major player (educator) and a minor player (parent) in education. Both the partners are equally important.

Strategies for involving parents in the education of their children were also discussed. There are many strategies and most of them do overlap. Those strategies are designed in such a way that they ensure a greater parental involvement in education.

The following will present the characteristics and background data on the information and the context in which this research takes place. The data collected during observations and in-depth individual and focus group interviews will be presented and discussed.

CHAPTER FIVE

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF EMPIRICAL DATA

"We no longer merely ask: What can the school do for my child?

but also

What can I do for the school?" (Educational Support Service Trust, 1997:3)

5.1. INTRODUCTION

The extent of parental involvement in the education of their children in the Northern Province will be examined in this chapter by means of responses from parents and teachers from the questionnaires. The pilot study involved approximately forty teachers from different schools in the Region 3 in the Soutpansberg East Circuit in the Northern Province of South Africa. The pilot study also involved eighty parents.

The three schools I have visited have no formal written documents on how to involve parents in the education of their children. None of these schools bother themselves to discuss ways on how to involve parents in the education of their children. Principals have no idea on how to involve parents in the education process. On the other hand, parents are not interested to be involved. Van Wyk (1996 : 271) mentions that the school may either facilitate or inhibit parental involvement by their own beliefs and attitude about parent involvement. She further says that this appears to be especially true of low-income communities where parents are seen as part of the problem in educating their children, rather than a resource. Teachers tend to have a negative attitude towards parents. Teachers blame parents' lack in behaviour and responsibility in their involvement in their children's education. There is also a lack of communication between teachers and parents.

The aim of this research was to find the views and opinions of teachers and parents concerning parental involvement in education. In this case, the relationship between the following variable will be investigated:

- Level of literacy and parents income and their involvement in education.
- Parents' level of education and their interest in education.
- Teachers' knowledge or experience and their perception of parent involvement.

5.2 METHOD OF INVESTIGATION

5.1.1 SELECTION OF SAMPLE

This research was confined to primary and secondary schools in the Region 3 in the Soutpansberg East Circuit in the Northern Province. There are more than fifty schools in this circuit. Therefore, it was difficult to consult all teachers and parents of the children with regard to parent involvement in education. Of these schools only three schools were chosen. The following schools were selected at random:

Khalavha Senior Primary School.

Gilbert Mulondo Junior Primary School.

Jack Lavhengwa Secondary School.

5.2.2 MEASURING INSTRUMENTS USED.

The measuring instruments used in this research consist of two groups of questionnaires; the first group of questionnaires was intended specifically for parents, and the last group was intended for teachers. The contents of the questionnaires was based on the problem formulation in Chapter 1, literature study in Chapter 2 and 3 as well as factors which cause lack of parental involvement in education. The aim of these questionnaires is to identify problems which prevent parents from participating in the education of their children and also the strategies to be implemented to solve these problems.

Questionnaires to parents and teachers were brief and to the point. The researcher asked permission from the respective principals to hand out the questionnaires. The teachers were given questionnaires and were asked to return them within three days. The same applied to parents. Parents' questionnaires were given to their children. Envelopes were supplied to ensure confidentiality. The researcher collected the questionnaires personally from the principals and teachers.

5.3 PERCEPTIONS OF PARENTS AND TEACHERS ON PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT.

5.3.1 PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IS BENEFICIAL

Teachers agree that parental involvement must be the schools' priority. A teacher at School A says that parental involvement lightens the work of teachers. He thinks that if teachers and parents work together, then the work becomes easier. He says:

"If parents help teachers in their children, our work becomes easier and lighter instead of heavier."

If teachers and parents work hand in hand, the overload of the teachers will be reduced. Ninety six percent of teachers also agreed that parental involvement would improve the child's schooling. If parents involve themselves in the education of their children, discipline at school improves. Teachers agreed that parental involvement can lead to greater control over students. If teachers and parents contact each other timeously, their children will realise that they would not have any chance for playing or being idle and loafing at school. One teacher pointed out that the child must not only be controlled at school but also at home.

By working together with parents, teachers agree that problems concerning the students can be easily solved.

By this is meant that, both teachers and parents can share ideas about their students. One teacher said that those parents who have time can come to school to share ideas with teachers. A teacher at School C suggested that parents ought to check their children's homework daily. By means of this parents would be involved in their children education. One teacher mentioned:

"A parent who regularly check his or her child's homework produces bright student."

The parent's task in children's homework is not only to check but also to see to it that the homework is properly completed.

Some pupils have family problems which can better be solved by parents rather than teachers. Teachers said that there are some family backgrounds which teachers know nothing. But, if teachers and parents work together, such problems have a better chance to be solved.

5.3.2 PARENT MEETINGS

Parent meetings are the main contact between parents and teachers. Mostly these meetings are held during the weekends on Sunday mornings. According to interviews held, these meetings are not well attended. One school complained that the majority of the people who attend are illiterate and are also grandparents. A principal from School B said that when he issues progress reports, he makes it a point that they are given to adults because some parent used to send their older children who are still at school, to fetch the reports.

When parents are invited to school it is when teachers address some issues concerning the education of their children. One teacher points out that when they invite parents to schools, parents sometimes use these meetings to discuss the community problems which are not related to education.

Some parents are power hungry and they want to satisfy their needs during these meetings. They say it is their school and they do whatever they like during the meetings. They do not care about the so-called 'agenda' of the meeting.'

Some working parents interviewed have no time to attend parent meetings. They usually come home late, and during the weekends they have many commitments, like attending funerals, weddings, birthday parties, washing their clothes, visiting friends and relatives, etc. Therefore parents usually send grandparents on their behalf. One parent said:

"I do not have a transport to the school which makes it difficult for me to attend parent meetings at night."

She went further and say that it is difficult for her to attend meetings at night due to the high crime rate in the village.

5.3.3 HOME VISITS

At schools I have interviewed it is rare for teachers to visit children's homes. But if there are serious problems, the principals usually visit the mother or father of the child or call the parent of the child to school. In School A, for example, when a parent of a child passes away, the whole members of the staff visit the particular family and do a prayer. In School B, one teacher says that if a child, for example, have certain serious disease at school, the principal goes to the home of the child to inform his or her parents. Some male teachers went to extent to say that in most cases the husbands may suspect foul play to their wives.

Nine eight percent of parents interviewed said that they have never been visited by the teachers of their children. They do not see any necessity for teachers to visit them. One parent say:

"I will never feel comfortable if one teacher visits me at home."

5.3.4 COMMUNICATION

Effective communication depends on the relationship between the teacher and the parents. Here we have two types of communication in this regard: written communication and oral communication between the class teacher or principal and the parents. Schools A and C have typewriters and duplicate machines, whereas School B does not have any of these. In School A letters are written in vernacular whereas in School C letters are written in English. Parents of the children in School C usually complain that they do not understand what is written in these letters, because most of the parents do not understand English. Parents then have to ask some well-educated members of the community to read and interpret to their mother tongue. Of these schools, only School C have a telephone. Letters to parents are given to children by their class teachers.

Class teachers of School A and B usually have chances to communicate with parents when they come to fetch their children's progress reports at the end of each quarter. School A invited parents to come to school to see their children's work, but very few turn up. They say they do not have time, they are always committed. Parents do not have enough time to communicate with teachers. Therefore, communication between parents and teachers becomes difficult. Even if they are called to school, they do not come.

A parent of a child at School A feels that parents must be called to school if their children have committed serious offences. Seventy one percent parents say it is the duty of the teacher to educate their children. Most parents say it is hard to involve themselves in the school education of their children whereas they themselves have never been in the classrooms in their entire lives.

Teachers also feel that parents must not wait for teachers to invite them their children attend, but they must come to schools and ask teachers about the progress of their children. Teachers at School A confirms that those who take initiative are usually the parents who have passed Std 10.

This means that literate parents are more likely to visit schools where their children attend. School C hold parent meetings approximately once a year and found the attendance being very low. Of these three Schools, only School A have class meetings with the parents. Some parents come to the class teacher to ask about the progress of progresses of their children even if they are not invited.

Healthy teacher-parent relationships are always promoted by means of two-way communication. There ought to be communication channels by which teachers and parents communicate. Transparency must be a prerequisite for matters of general interest, issues, rules and regulations, decisions, and this must be conveyed clearly to parents.

5.3.5 LEVEL OF EDUCATION

Teachers agree that illiteracy cost a lot as far as parental involvement is concerned. Teachers mention that most parents in their rural areas are not educated. Fifty one percent of parents do not understand what is happening in schools. Because some of them are illiterate, they do not want to come to school, and they send grandparents to schools on their behalf. Parents fear the school environment and its staff members. All schools interviewed agreed that parents' illiteracy is a major barrier to effective parent involvement. Parents cannot even help their children with their schoolwork because of illiteracy.

One teacher points out that most parents do not understand the importance of education because most of them never had an opportunity of going to school. The perception of teachers indicated that parents in rural areas do not care enough about their children education and therefore do not become involved in their school activities.

From interviews it is clear that illiterate parents do not understand what is happening in schools and therefore they withdraw from school activities and they think that the school must do everything on their behalf. Because they are uneducated they put all their trust

on the teachers. The answers obtained from parents showed that there is a relationship between the parents' level of education and parental involvement in education. Parents who are educated care for the education of their children whereas the illiterate ones are not involved in the education of their children at school. Parents need guidance so that they can know what is expected of them and be empowered to partake in meetings and discussions concerning their children.

5.3.6 RESPONSIBILITY

Teachers indicate that most parents are unwilling to accept responsibility for school matters. They also indicated that parents tend to place their responsibilities on the teachers' shoulders. Parents think that teachers must do everything and they think that the school belongs to the teachers and not to them. Some parents point out that education is the duty of teachers only. They do not want to be involved as they say that they are not trained to educate children.

One teacher suggests that education of the children is the responsibility of the teachers, parents as well as the government. The school should have a policy of improving parenting skills. One teacher says:

"There is no discipline at school at all because parents fail in their parenting duties."

Parents do not seem to realize that they are the primary educators of their children. Some teachers at School B think that parenting skills is needed among most parents. They think that Adult Basic Education and Training could be a solution to parents. They also suggested that parents must also be helped individually whenever they visit schools.

Parents acknowledged a number of mistakes on their part. They usually do not discipline their children because they say that they do not have time. Teachers mentioned that parents are unsupportive and lack interest in school issues. The fact that fathers are the most uninvolved in schooling is seen as a great problem.

Teachers interviewed pointed out that a number of problems experienced in their schools actually stem from the home. Many parents neglect their parental responsibilities and expect the schools to do everything, such as taking care of the children, guiding and disciplining them. The poor upbringing in many homes causes problems in the schools. Nxumalo (1993:60) indicated that there is a general understanding that many parents work and are unable to fulfill some of their parental duties.

Forty percent of children come from poor and unstable families, and many of them are born out of wedlock. They are usually raised by their grandmothers. Sometimes the real parents stay elsewhere and do not have time for their children. When they come to school teachers say they encounter many problems from these children. Poverty also results in social disintegration in rural schools. A number of children have no positive role models in their lives. This in turn has a bad effect on the education process. Grassroots community structures according to teachers interviewed, are hardly operating in rural communities in the Northern Province. Therefore it is hard to deal with a number of problems that originate from the community. There is a communication breakdown within the community itself and between the schools and the community.

5.3.7 HOMEWORK

When teachers are asked whether parents assist or involve themselves in the homework of their children, most of them take this question as a joke. One teacher says:

"Parents do not bother themselves in assisting their children in doing their homework. They do not even check their books. What they only want is a 'pass' at the end of the year."

Teachers agreed that if parents assist their children in their homework, that would make the work lighter. Teachers also felt that, because most parents are illiterate, a neighbour or elder brothers and sisters can be asked to assist. A teacher at School A wanted parents

to sign their children's books to let parents have insight in the progress of their children. One teacher felt that parents should ask their children about homework every day. Teachers interviewed agreed that parents must be involved in their children's homework. Another teacher said that when they meet parents, nothing is said about involving them in their children's homework. Parents are not given advice and guidance on how this should be done. Teachers agreed that most children do their homework on their own. Most teachers interviewed are not satisfied about the amount of co-operation they get from parents regarding the homework to their children. They agree that only the literate ones look at their children's books whereas the illiterate ones do not bother themselves.

5.3.8 DECISION MAKING

Seventy one percent of teachers interviewed say that most parents do not have insight in what is happening at schools, therefore they are in most cases not involved in decision making. Teachers feel that parents are not familiar with school matters. When meetings are called, literate parents do not attend. When parents elect members of the School Governing Bodies, they do not even look at the potential of a person. Of all schools visited no one have a policy of involving parents in the education of their children.

Parents on the other hand feel that they are neglected by teachers when it comes to decision making. Parents interviewed said that they are mainly told what was resolved by the members of the staff in writing. They feel that they are undermined when it comes to decision making.

5.3.9 PARENTS AS VOLUNTEERS IN SCHOOLS

Of all the school visited, there are few parents that are used as volunteers in schools. Parents are not even called to clean the school or assist in other fields which they expertise. Teachers feel that parents will never agree on this issue. When some parents are called to assist in schools they demand remuneration. Parents do not even bother

themselves to come and watch their children playing soccer and netball. In most cases, schools ask parents to help with money. When parents are invited, what they bring are only their ears and they never really participate in the education of their children. At Schools A and B parents who come and cook as part of the feeding scheme are paid by buying them groceries worth R300.00 per month each. This shows that they are not volunteers. Teachers at Schools A and B pointed out that parents help by covering their children's books at the beginning of the year. By volunteering, teachers agree that this could help parents to see conditions under which teachers work and it will give them insight into many educational problems.

Parents do not help with fundraising, with the supervision of pupils on trips, or with playground duties, decorating the school, maintaining the gardens and doing minor repairs to the school. Teachers say that parents may be used to help in the class in many ways. Parents may also be used to supervise classroom activities, such as checking pupils' completed work, listening to children read, supervising audio-visual equipments, etc. School C mentions that parents do not volunteer and most of them do not know what is happening in classes where their children attend. On the other hand most of them are illiterate.

Parents are also of the opinion that they are not invited to help in different programs in which they expertise. One parent with a child in School A confirms that he had once been invited to coach a school soccer team. The same applies to one parent who also said that she is always invited to train traditional dance to pupils at school.

5.3.10 COMMUNITY RELATIONS

School A,B and C use the community in different ways. Nurses from the Department of Health are used to discuss health issues. Traffic officers are also called to talk about road safety, especially to lower classes. The local civic association also work hand in hand with the schools. Police officers are also called to talk about crime prevention.

According to some teachers the relationship between the school and the community is sometimes bad due to the fact that they do not trust each other.

5.3.11 PARENTS' INTEREST AND ATTITUDE ON EDUCATION

Eighty five percent of teachers interviewed pointed out that many parents are not interested in becoming involved in the education of their children. They do not even care about the education of their children. One teacher says:

"Even if we have a serious problem with their children, they will not come if we invite them. They say it is the responsibility of the teacher. We go to an extent of announcing meetings over the local radio station but they will not come."

Some parents will not come up to the end of the year. One teacher at School A says:

"If parents are interested in the education of their children the job becomes easier for teachers. Parents and teachers should work together."

Many parents are uninterested in what is happening in schools and by this they are neglecting the education of their children. Many teachers agree that in their rural schools parents do not care enough about the education of their children and they do not become involved in school activities. Parents do not like to come to school because they have the perception that they will be ignored by teachers because they are not well educated like teachers. One parent says that she feels intimidated by the school and its staff members and that is why she is not interested in school matters.

Teachers see parents as people with negative attitudes and as uncooperative towards the education of their children. School A, B and C agreed that parents are uncooperative. Because of parents negative attitudes, teachers feel that this could hinder development. At School C teachers emphasized the fact that parents only criticize teachers. Teachers agreed that parents in rural areas usually have a negative attitude towards schools.

Of all schools interviewed, teachers mentioned that the number of attendance in parent meetings is very low. It looks as if parents are no longer interested in the education of their children. Grandparents according to teachers, seem to be the ones who are interested, but the problem is that the majority of them are illiterate.

Many teachers interviewed said that parental involvement is associated with aggressive or negative encounters with parents.

5.3.12 TIME

Teachers admitted that most parents have very little no time to involve themselves in the education of their children. Teachers agreed that limited time is seen as a barrier to parent involvement in education. Parents said that they knock off late and have to travel long distances to and from work. They come home very tired and they cannot involve themselves in the education of their children. Eighty three percent of parents say that they come back home mainly on weekends which makes it difficult for them to involve themselves in the education of their children. One parent said:

"I knock off very late and the school expect me to come over the weekends. I am always busy on weekends. I have to visit my friends, do my washing, etc."

It is thus clear that parents do not have enough time to work together with teachers in the education of their children.

5.3.13 TEACHERS' KNOWLEDGE FOR PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Ninety six percent of teachers interviewed agreed that they have little or no experience of parental involvement. Some teachers with more than fifteen years teaching experience agreed that they have no experience of parental involvement. On being interviewed whether they had been trained to implement parental involvement, all of them said that they had never been trained to implement parental involvement. Teachers agreed that lack of parental involvement in education stems mainly from the fact that teachers are not

trained to work with parents. If such training can be offered, most teachers would welcome such training.

Some parents say that even if they are invited, they are not told what to do to develop the education of their children. They are invited as listeners. One parent says that parents are not given any opportunities to involve themselves in education. This is because teachers are not trained to involve parents in the education process.

5.4 CONCLUSION ON PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN RURAL SCHOOLS IN THE NORTHERN PROVINCE.

According to this research, there are many factors in rural schools in the Northern Province which prevent parents from involving themselves in the education of their children. The following factors can be mentioned:

- Limited time
- Lack of volunteers among parents
- Lack of communication
- Unhealthy relationship between the community and the school
- Illiteracy among parents
- Parents who are uninterested and unwilling to cooperate.
- Lack of training on the side of teachers.

Parents ought to have a positive impact on the education of their children. If they work together with teachers the job becomes easier for teachers. The idea is a positive, mutual relationship of understanding between the home and the school. Parents and teachers are equal partners in education and no one is superior to the other. Teachers on the other hand must require much skills to involve parents. They must have the confidence to become involved in schools and their contributions must be considered.

In the rural areas attention must be to improve the attitude of parents towards the schools. Possible reasons for the negative attitudes of parents towards the schools are :

- The parents do not know why and how they can be involved in school activities. The parents feel that the teachers are qualified and salaried to educate the children.
- Parents cannot visualise the positive results of a long school career. Especially in rural schools it is more important for the parents that their children stay on farms or work somewhere else to earn a living.

The main reasons why parents are not actively involved in school activities, are:

- The negative attitude of parents towards the school.
- Feelings of inferiority towards the teachers.
- Lack of knowledge and competencies of parents and teachers.
- Lack of structures or opportunities from the side of the school.
- Importance of demographic reasons.
- Socio-economic factors.

The last chapter will provide an evaluation of parental involvement in education in rural schools in the Northern Province especially in the Region 3 in the Soutpansberg East Circuit. This chapter will also provide conclusions, solutions and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER SIX

6. EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Parental involvement in education has aroused national, political and local interest (Engle 199 : 42). The issue of parental say in education is provided in current education legislation. This has been emphasised by South African Schools Bill No.84 of 1996; The Northern Province Schools Education Act of 1995; The White Paper on Education and Training of 1995; The Hunter Report of 1995; and The White Paper No.2 of 1995. This shows that the government itself is committed to parent involvement in education. The relationship between parents and schools should change from a client type of relationship to a partnership relationship. Previously parents were perceived as clients, and they did not have a lot of say in the school and the management of schools. Currently it is expected that parents must be partners, which indicates that parents are part of the decision-making process and its implementation in schools. They have equal strengths and equal expertise; they contribute and receive services on an equal footing and finally share responsibility and accountability with the professional staff in schools (Khan 1996 : 60). A shared sense of purpose, mutual respects, sharing of information, responsibility and accountability is important if we want this partnership to succeed (Wolfendale 1992 : 14).

6.2 OVERVIEW OF THE INVESTIGATION

In this last chapter, the outcome of the previous five chapters will be reviewed. In chapter one a general orientation, problem formulation, aim of study, clarification of concepts and sequence of study were done. In chapter two a literature survey on the history of parental involvement was done. In chapter three a theoretical perception as far as parental involvement in education is concerned was described.

Chapter four focused on the causes of the lack of parental involvement in education. Factors which prevent parental involvement in education were investigated.

Chapter five focused on the case study of rural schools in the Northern Province. In this final chapter a summary of findings of the research is presented and the evaluation of parental involvement is provided. In conclusion, the key issues emerged from the study are discussed and recommendations are made.

6.3 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The emphasis of this research was on parent involvement within rural schools in the Northern Province.

As highlighted in chapter five, questions that are of particular importance in this research are 'how often do teachers and parents':

- (i) communicate with each other?
- (ii) work together?
- (iii) how often do parents assist in:
 - school activities
 - childrens school work
 - decision making
- (iv) visit each other
- (v) how often do teachers assist parents to become involved in the education of their children?
- (vi) how often do teachers and parents meet?
- (vii) what is the attitude of parents towards their children's school education?

It was found that most parents have negative attitudes towards school related matters. Teachers on the other hand have no ideas on how to involve parents in the education of their children.

Parent volunteers are not found in rural schools. Parents do not volunteer in the fields in which they expertise. They are always busy and have no time. There is a total separation between the school and the community. The community is not involved in the education process in the rural

schools. Where parents are involved, it is only in terms of financial support.

There are many barriers which prevent parents from involving themselves in the education of their children.

In the rural schools the following barriers were listed on the side of parents:

- parents are uninterested in what is happening in schools
- parents are negative towards the school and teachers
- there is a high rate of illiteracy
- there is a lack of training
- parents are unwilling to accept responsibilities for school matters
- limited time and
- most parents feel intimidated by the school and its environment.

The following barriers in rural schools were also mentioned with teachers :

- lack of implementation of ideas on parents involvement
- lack of teacher preparation for parent involvement
- teachers have a limited view of the role parents can play in school matters
- teachers do not facilitate parental involvement in their schools.

It was also found in this investigation that many children in the rural areas are not necessarily cared for by their biological parents. Most of the children are left in the care of their grandparents. Many parents work outside their homes. It is also found that the majority of parents are not familiar with parenting skills and this leads to problems relating to the parenting tasks. Also, in accordance with this research many, families in the rural areas live in poverty. Many homes do not have water and electricity and this have a bad impact on the education of their children.

6.4 EVALUATION

Van Wyk (1996 : 282) points out that all activities relating to parent involvement bring together the separate domains of community and school.

The success of parent involvement rests on mutual understanding and communication between the parents and the school. Teachers, as professionals determine the extent of the involvement and participation of parents in the education of their children. It is the duty of the teachers and principals to lead parents in their involvement in the education of their children. The teachers must be able to know what are the constituents of a successful parent-teacher relationship. If teachers understand the importance of parent involvement in education then they will be able to influence parents to involve themselves in the education of their children.

Parental involvement is beneficial to principals, teachers, parents as well as students (Engle 1998 : 92). Gone are those days when education was only the responsibility of the school.

Parents have a significant part to play in the education of their children. Parents' input in the education process is vital. There should be a balanced relationship between parents and teachers. We have to move away from the separation of the home and the school and move towards an increasing awareness and recognition of the central role of parents as equal partners in the education of their children.

Principals and teachers in the education situation have a variety of tasks which they are responsible for, therefore, they should not be alone in this task of teaching. According to Masalesa (1996 : 1) teaching should be a matter of team-work. She further points out that structures represented by parents, nurses, social workers and parties interested in education should be involved in education. They should share and contribute with their experiences in the development of a child. Parents must know what is happening at schools and also understand the whole set up of the schools. Brooks (1981 : 138) agrees that parents are the people who primarily influence children's attitude towards learning. Therefore, their involvement in education is of utmost importance.

6.5 SOME SOLUTIONS SUGGESTED FOR THE RURAL SCHOOLS IN THE NORTHERN PROVINCE FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Van Wyk (1996 : 287) recommended that teachers of the children from deprived communities are made aware of the prevailing conditions under which families are living. Therefore, colleges and universities involved in teacher education should adequately prepare teachers to work in schools serving these communities through the presentation of the relevant courses. Schools in these disadvantaged rural areas must explore ways of involving parents in the education of their children, for example, one literate parent can assist children of illiterate parents who live nearby.

The education must be in accordance with the norms and values of a particular society. Parents should be made feel welcome in the education process and they must be treated as equal partners in the education of their children. It is the duty of the school to develop programmes to allow parents to get involved in the education. Parent volunteers in and outside the classroom must be introduced in schools. Parents must be aware of the value of volunteers in education.

Teachers must on the other hand know that parent involvement in education needs thorough preparation on their side. Van Wyk (1996 : 300) also recommends that the school should be able to provide information for the community on community health, cultural, recreational and social support. The school should work closely with other stakeholders with interest in education.

The school must not see parents as part of the problem in the education but as partners. The relationship between the community and the school needs to be restructured in the rural schools. Solomon (1991 : 360) supports this when he says that parent involvement boosts student learning. Parents can be used as resource, for example, a nurse may be asked to give a lecture on nutrition. There should be a two way communication between parents and teachers. Parents must be partners in both teaching and decision making.

The following solutions are suggested for the rural schools for the improvement of parent involvement in education :

- Parents should be kept informed about school activities by means of letters.
- Year programmes should be discussed with parents.
- General matters such as discipline and homework should be discussed with parents.
- Parents should attend sport days, cultural festivals and other special occasions.
- Since it is difficult for fathers to visit schools, there should be an annual fathers' day when the school and the fathers' employers expect them to visit their children's schools.
- Mothers should be allowed to visit the school and sit in classes of their children.
- Parents should have a say in aspects such as appointment of teachers, conditions of service, the standard of education and the formulation of educational policy.
- More contact between the home and the school must be emphasised.
- There should be informal contact between the school and the community.
- Parents should receive necessary information from the school for cooperation.
- Teachers should give parents insight into school activities in order to counteract any sense of alienation.
- Announce meetings and other event long enough in advance for parent to arrange for time off work if necessary.
- Organize evening meetings with child care, so that parents can talk to teachers and counsellors.
- Provide before-school and after-school care should be provided as well as some supervision for older children.
- Draw up a strategic plan for parent involvement and ensure that it is practicable.
- Regular home-visit by teachers to parents of the children must be encouraged.
- Introduce family learning centres in schools, store fronts and churches that offer help to parents wanting to help their children learn.
- Capacity-building must be directed to community empowerment and entails the development of both the material and human resources necessary for effective governance and management.
- Introduce learning activities created by the schools that parents can use at home with their children.

- Open enrolment must be allowed so that children can attend school near their parents' place of work.

Rosenthal and Sawyers (1996:196) mention the following parental involvement programmes and strategies:

- Educational support and drop-out prevention programmes.
- Parenting skills training.
- Workshops where parents can judge their schools' quality.
- Adult literacy programmes.
- Parent tutoring programmes for their own children.
- Random meetings with the principal.
- Potluck meals in the classroom.
- Field trips with invited parents.
- Invitations for parents to make presentations.
- Assignments of parents to committees.
- Recognition of parents at school assemblies.
- Fathers' night out.
- Evening conferences.

6.6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN RURAL SCHOOLS

The literature study of chapters two, three and four and the empirical study of chapter five form the basis for the following recommendations for improving parental involvement in the education process.

Heystek and Louw (1999:27) recommend that schools and the National and Provincial Departments of Education must take specific action to improve the involvement of parents in school activities. The parents must be able to see the advantages for them if they are involved. Improved academic achievements and a healthy school community are the biggest advantages

for improved parental involvement. All the stakeholders in the schools and their communities must work towards rectifying the problems that inhibit parents to be actively involved in school activities. Improved communication will ensure that the parents will know why and how they can be involved. This may change their negative attitude.

Schools must initiate the process for parents to be involved. Every school must identify their needs and then provide the opportunities and structures for the parents to be positively involved. Principals must motivate the parents to this end. Knowledge and competencies of the parents are of utmost importance to enable them to be actively involved (Hargreaves and Hopkins 1993 : 56). The parents can be involved at different levels, according to their skills and knowledge. These levels can range from motivation and assistance with homework to management on the school (Khan 1996 : 61). The biggest need for parental involvement is in the rural areas. The Provincial Departments of Education should assist the principals in these schools to get the parents involved. This is the area where parental involvement can make a significant improvement to the standard of education.

- Parents should be invited to visit schools.
- Parents should be kept informed about the progress of their own children.
- Teachers should develop workshops for parents.
- Some parents who are experts in certain fields can be used as volunteers.
- Teachers Colleges, Universities and other institutions of learning should design courses for specialisation in the field of parent involvement in education.
- Schools should give parents enough opportunities to become involved in the education process.
- Principals and teachers should facilitate parent involvement.
- Parents should be treated with respect irrespective of their level of education.
- Curriculum should be designed in such a way that it includes the norms and values of the society.
- The function of the school should be beneficial to the community.

6.7 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The findings of this study on parent involvement in rural communities suggest the following priority areas in the search for further knowledge.

- Parental involvement and the promotion of culture of teaching and learning.
- Parental involvement as part of a course in teacher training colleges, universities and other learning institutions.
- Parental involvement and the South African politics.
- Involving low income parents in education.
- Effects of parent involvement in education.
- Family structure and parent involvement.
- Parental involvement and governance in education.
- The influence of the community on the education process.
- Parental involvement in a multicultural school.
- The effect of parent illiteracy on education.
- Strategies to involve parents in education.
- The effect of working parents on the children's education.
- The influence of family environment on education.
- Home-visiting as an aspect of parent involvement.

6.8 CONCLUSION

An education system is the totality of all structures including the community (parents) which are concerned with education. Every parent wishes for the best for his or her child. This is often is overshadowed by the parents' lack of knowledge, illiteracy, disinterest, negative attitude and lack of training. Teachers on the other hand can give more input into parent involvement. Communication between parents, co-operation and mutual trust can be established by teachers and be maintained by both teachers and parents. Effective parental involvement can reach it full potential if there is effective communication.

The research undertaken emphasised the importance of parental involvement in the education

process. Le Roux (1998 : 408) points out that education is preparation not only for a life of work, but life of worth and when parents seek to exercise their right to ensure that the education their children receive conforms with their expectations, their actions should not be seen as cases of censorship, but rather as cases of judgement, discernment and selection dedicated by their particular philosophy of life.

From this research, the researcher can conclude that socio-economic status plays a role in parental involvement in education. Goodacre (1970:93) and Gabela (1983:93) support this when they point out that parents from lower socio-economic group are frustrated by material deprivation and a struggle for survival and thus are not likely to give personal care to their children.

It was discussed in chapter three that the issue of parental say in education is provided in the current education legislation and the concept of parent involvement is conceivably as old as education itself as mentioned in chapter two of this research. Today, modern members of the society are expected to participate in school activities. Dekker and Lemmer (1993 : 187) agree that active parent involvement in educational issues is a concept which local and parent school communities will have to adapt. In today's society, schools alone cannot meet all children's needs. In rural areas, the family seems to be the most underutilised resource in schooling. The principle of democratic governance should increasingly be reflected in every level of the system, by the involvement in consultation and appropriate forms of decision-making of elected representatives of the main stakeholders, interest groups and role players. Informal contact between the school and the community is regarded as more important for healthy relations than formal contact (Pretorius et. Al. 1996 : 38).

It is obvious that there are many benefits to good relationship between the school and society. It is also equally obvious that there are still many obstacles to overcome before all these stakeholders will be able to reap these benefit. Co-operation between the school and the community needs to be facilitated. However the teachers must be able to initiate a working relationship which will be to the benefit to all concerned in the education process. Watson (1995 : 12) makes it clear that parental pressure helps to improve educational standards.

Effective parental involvement in school affairs is largely determined by healthy school-community relationships. The necessary opportunity should be given to parents and other stakeholders with interest in education to express their expectations and needs concerning the school. Teachers should not try to manipulate parents opinions regarding the school but provide the school community with an understanding of the school and involve parents actively in school affairs. Dekker and Lemmer (1993 : 187) point out that, for long time the question has no longer been one of whether time should be made promoting parent-school community relations, but rather how this can be most effectively utilised and who should take the initiative.

In most American countries, including USA and Canada parental involvement is emphasised. In Canada, for example, the Departments of Education distribute many information pamphlets such as:

- Information and Facts about Education in Newfound land and Labrador;
- A guide for parents of children experiencing difficulty in learning;
- Policy statement on equality of opportunity for males and females in education; and
- Parents guide to the Public schools Act (Dekker and Van Schalkwyk 1990:368-408).

Therefore, the role of parents in education in Canadian education is acknowledged fully. They are represented in various bodies, for instance; School boards and Parents' associations. The same applies in South Africa. The Hunter Commission of 1995 and the Draft White Paper 2 of 1995 shows that the government is taking the issue of parent involvement in education seriously.

To conclude this, parents must know that teachers need them in schools to fulfill their multiple roles (Van Wyk 1996 : vi). Teachers must take the lead in involving parents in the education process. They have to create awareness among parents by teaching them how to make their contributions in education. Both the school (teachers) and the community (parents) must know their tasks regarding the education of the children.

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UNIVERSITY OF STELLENBOSCH
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE: PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN
RURAL SCHOOLS IN THE NORTHERN PROVINCE

This interview schedule is designed to determine the role that parents might play in the education of their children. It is an attempt to assess the perception held by both parents and teachers regarding each other's role in education.

QUESTIONNAIRES

TO TEACHERS

INSTRUCTIONS

Please be assured that your responses should be held in the strictest confidence.

1. Do you know the parents of your students?

2. Do you share ideas with parents?

3. What contributions do parents of your students make in the education of their children?

4. How do you communicate with parents?

5. Do you visit parents at their homes?

6. Do you have volunteers on the side of parents at your school?

7. Which factors in your opinion prevent parents from participating in the education of their children at your school?

8. What do you think should be done to improve parental involvement in education?

QUESTIONNAIRES

TO PARENTS**INSTRUCTIONS**

Please be assured that your responses should be held in the strictest confidence. Place an X in the appropriate block.

SECTION A

1. Who is the respondent?

Mother

	1
	2

Father

2. How many children in your family passed Std 10?

One

	1
	2
	3

Two

More than two

3. Present occupation

Employer	1
Self-employed	2
Employee	3
Temporarily unemployed	4
Pensioner	5
Disabled	6
Student	7
Other	8

4. Family Total Income Per Year

R10 000 +

R6 000 - R9 999

R2 000 - R5 999

R1000 - R1999

Below R1 000

	1
	2
	3
	4
	5

SECTION B

1. How often do you visit the school where your child attend?

2. Do you work together with teachers?

- (a) If yes, how do you work together?

- (b) If no, which factors you feel prevent you as a parent from participating in the education of your children?

3. Do you assist in school activities?

4. Do you assist your children in doing their homework?

5. Mother's Level of Education

Std 10 + Tertiary Education

	1
--	---

Std 10 or Std 9

	2
--	---

Std 8 or Std 7

	3
--	---

Std 6

	4
--	---

Below Std 6

	5
--	---

6. Father's Level of Education

Std 10 + Tertiary Education

	1
--	---

Std 10 or Std 9

	2
--	---

Std 8 or Std 7

	3
--	---

Std 6

	4
--	---

Below Std 6

	5
--	---

7. How often do you communicate with teachers of your child?

More than once a term

	1
--	---

At least a term

	2
--	---

At least once a year

	3
--	---

Very rarely

	4
--	---

Never

	5
--	---

8. If you have never communicate with teachers of your child, please rate the following in terms of applicability to your circumstances.

1. Not applicable

2. Slightly applicable

3. Applicable

4. Very applicable.

a. Time does not permit you to do so

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

b. You are afraid of being accused of interference.

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---